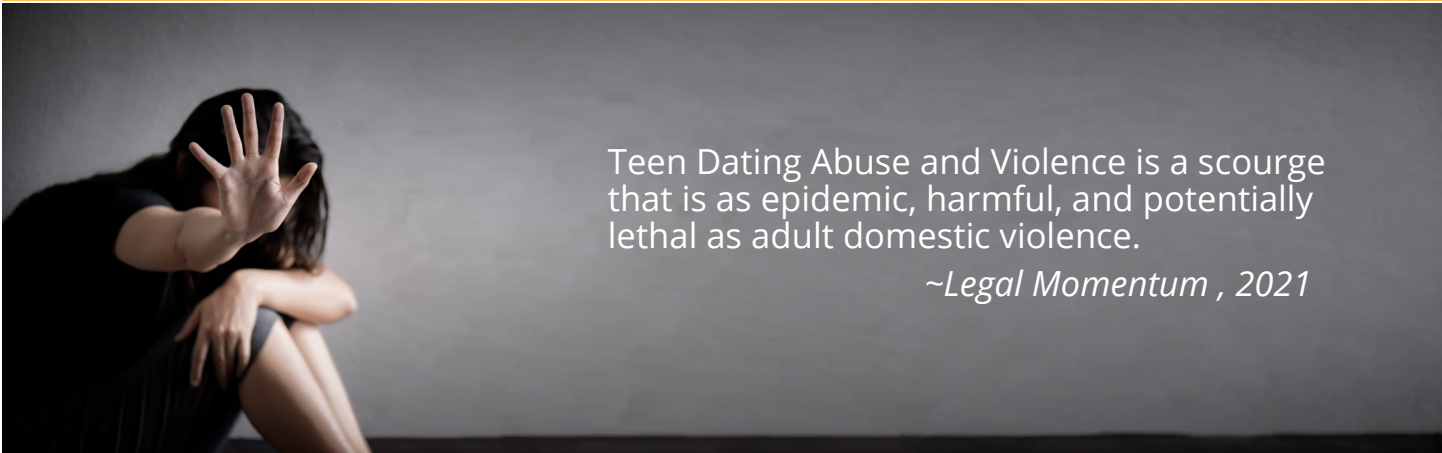


Teen Dating Violence

Know the Warning Signs

Part 2



Teen Dating Abuse and Violence is a scourge that is as epidemic, harmful, and potentially lethal as adult domestic violence.

~Legal Momentum, 2021

More Common Than You Think

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, and abuse advocates are focused on raising awareness about how common Teen Dating Violence (TDV) is among young people. According to *love is respect*, a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, more than 1.5 million high school students in the United States will be abused by someone they are dating every year. In fact, 1 in 3 girls in the U.S. is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds rates of other types of youth violence.

Teen Dating Violence, like other forms of domestic violence, does not discriminate. People of any race, gender, religion, education level, or economic status can be a victim or a perpetrator. With TDV, as with any type of domestic violence, there is a pattern of behavior used by one partner to maintain power and control over the other. This can evolve slowly, making it difficult to recognize when a relationship has gone from being healthy to unhealthy.

Victims of TDV are more at risk for decreased mental and emotional health, substance abuse, re-entering abusive relationships in the future, and becoming victims of human trafficking. Since TDV usually impacts the victim's self-image in a negative way, traffickers are able to prey on the accompanying vulnerability. Many teens will not report these unhealthy behaviors because they do not want their family and friends to know about it.

This newsletter includes information regarding what constitutes teen dating violence, some of the warning signs to look for, data that may surprise you, and resources that are available to help you better understand teen dating violence.



PREVENTION SERVICES

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Behaviors and TDV

Teen dating violence can include any of the following types of behavior:



Physical violence - when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force.

Sexual violence - forcing or attempting to force a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, or a non-physical sexual event (e.g., sexting) when the partner does not or cannot consent.

Psychological aggression - is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person.

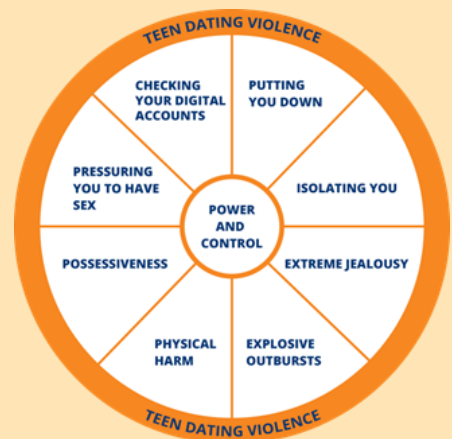
Stalking - a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a partner that causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to the victim.

Teen dating violence can also happen digitally, like unwanted, repeated calls and texts, as well as pressure to send private pictures or videos.

Recognize the Signs

These warning signs of teen dating violence can help you identify whether your teen is in an abusive relationship:

- Your teen's partner is extremely jealous or possessive, and checks in on your daughter or son often
- You overhear verbal abuse, such as insults, name-calling, or demeaning comments
- Your teen avoids friends and family, and drops activities or other interests
- Your teen has unexplained injuries
- You notice excessive text messaging, calls, or emailing between your teen and their partner
- Your teen's grades are declining or they may be missing school more often
- Your teen apologizes or makes excuses for their partner's behavior
- Your teen has become more secretive or withdrawn



Consequences of Teen Dating Violence

Youth who experience teen dating violence are more likely to:

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors including alcohol and drug use
- Exhibit anti-social behaviors, like lying, theft, bullying or hitting
- Have thoughts of suicide

15%
OF MEN



Experienced intimate partner violence for the first time before age 18.

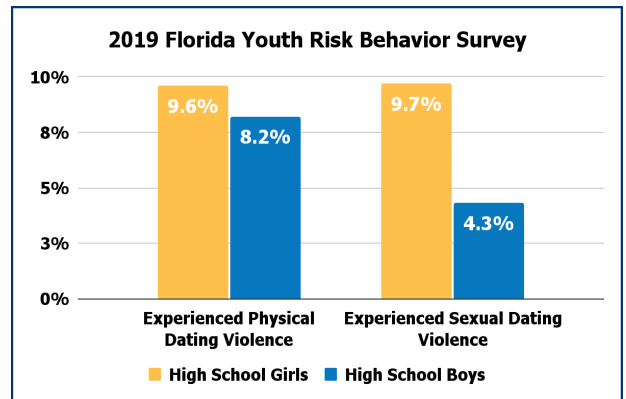
26%
OF WOMEN



Why Teens May Stay

There are a lot of reasons a teen might continue to stay in a relationship where they are abused. Some of these are:

- They still have feelings of love for their abuser and they do not want to get them in trouble.
- They are scared that their abuser will hurt them if they leave.
- They think things could go back to how they “used to be”.
- They are ashamed and embarrassed that others will find out about the abuse.
- They may not know where to turn for help.



It can be truly frightening to leave an abusive relationship, but it's important to get out. The abuse rarely gets better. In fact, it usually gets worse. Left unchecked, teen dating abuse and violence can establish a lifetime pattern of perpetration by abusers and acceptance of abuse by victims.

What Can Parents Do?

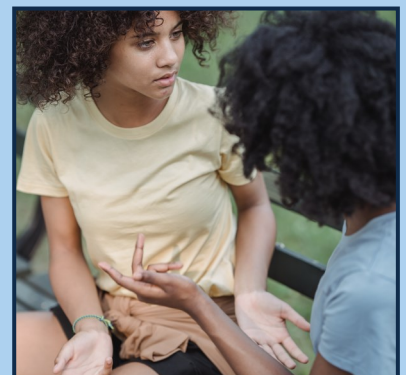
According to *Impact of the Economy and Parent/Teen Dialogue on Dating Relationships and Abuse*, fewer than 1/3 (32%) of teens in an abusive relationship confide in their parents about it. If you suspect your teen is the victim of dating violence, make sure your teen knows you are there to help. Keep the focus on your teen, not the abuser.

Discuss Boundaries. Digital, physical, financial, and emotional boundaries are necessary to have a healthy and balanced relationship. Explain to your teen that these personal parameters may seem like they hinder a relationship, but they actually lay the groundwork for respectful and healthy partnerships. Everyone has the right to create boundaries, which may change throughout the relationship.

Tell your teen that you are concerned for his or her safety. Point out that what is happening is not normal. Remind your teen that he or she deserves a violence-free relationship and that abuse is NEVER appropriate and NEVER their fault.

Be aware that TDV is not uncommon. A survey published in *Women's Health* showed that 81% of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it is an issue. And in a parent survey done by TrU Insight Media, dating abuse ranked last on a list of nine topics parents said they most commonly discuss with their teens.

Be supportive and understanding. Stress to your teen that you are on his or her side, and make it clear that you don't blame your teen and that you respect his or her choices. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Offer to connect your teen with a professional, such as a counselor who will keep their conversations confidential. Furthermore, if need be, contact law enforcement.



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

10 QUESTIONS TO START THE CONVERSATION



Parent Guide

It is not advisable to demand that your teen immediately break up with their abuser. Because teens are in the middle of their search for independence, they may dig in their heels. For more help with this situation, Breakthecycle.org offers access to this resource:

[A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Violence](#)

Teens who have witnessed violence within their own family are 50% more likely to be involved in an abusive relationship themselves.



1 in 3 young people will be in an abusive or unhealthy relationship in their adolescence

Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

In 2010, Congress declared that each February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month (TDVAM). The 2023 theme for TDVAM is "Be About It", selected by the **love is respect** Youth Council. This is a campaign to amplify the needs of youth and their experiences with dating abuse. Teens, young adults, and their loved ones join together to spotlight this pervasive and harmful issue, and how prevention and education can change the outcomes for those impacted by it.



[Loveisrespect 2023 TDVAM Action Guide](#)

[Youth.gov TDVAM Information](#)

love is
respect

The organization **love is respect** is a project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and offers information and support for young people between the ages of 13 and 26. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1-866-331-9474

[**loveisrespect.org**](https://loveisrespect.org)

Additional Resources

You are your child's most important source of information and support. The resources below offer more information about teen dating violence.

[CDC Teen Dating Violence Fast Facts](#)

[Futures Without Violence](#)

[One Love Foundation](#)

[US Dept of Justice TDV](#)

[Dating Matters](#)

[TDV Prevention Month Resources](#)

