

Dating Abuse

Facts & Conversation Guide

I. THE FACTS

Ideally, talk about relationship abuse with your child before they start dating. Sharing your knowledge and advice will help protect and guide them as they start to form relationships. It also sends the message that you are someone your teen can come to if they need help.

Since most physical and sexual abuse is perpetrated by males, having a conversation about dating abuse with both girls and boys is a must. Our children need positive adult role models and guidance as they learn how to meet life's challenges and to develop healthy relationships.

Statistics:

- Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. (1)
- Almost a third (29%) of teens has been the victim of sexual abuse, physical abuse, or threats of physical abuse by a boyfriend or girlfriend. (2)
- Youth 12 to 19 years old experience the highest rates of sexual victimization, and those 16 to 19 years old are three and a half times more likely than the general population to experience rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. (3,4)
- Half of adult sex offenders (over 95% male) report committing their first sexual offense prior to age 18. (5)

Impact of abuse:

- Victims of dating abuse are at increased risk of injury, suicide attempts, substance abuse and unhealthy sexual behaviors leading to unintended pregnancy and STIs. (6,7,8)
- Abusive experiences can disrupt a teen's normal development, impacting their self-concept, self-esteem and body image and can result in unhealthy patterns of abuse in future relationships. (Ibid)

Keeping abuse a secret:

- Teens often keep dating abuse a secret.
- They may believe the abuser loves them, blame themselves for the abuse, be fearful about losing the relationship or what will happen if they tell.
- The teen may be engaging in forbidden activities with the abuser (e.g., having sex, drinking alcohol, smoking pot) and afraid if they tell they will be punished for the risky behavior.
- *Make sure your teen knows that protecting them from an abusive person is more important to you than any risky behavior they may have engaged in.*

II. THE CONVERSATION

Before the conversation –

- ✓ Review the questions below and note the ones you'd like to focus on.
- ✓ Review *Conversation Tips* [click here](#)

1) When I say teen dating abuse, what types of abuse do you think that could include? (*verbal, physical, sexual, emotional, digital abuse*).

Ask teen to give you 2-3 examples.

pushing or shoving someone, calling the other person disrespectful names, forcing someone into sexual activity, trying to control another's behavior; constantly calling or texting another to check up on him/her which is called digital dating abuse, etc.

2) Have you or someone you know experienced abuse by a friend or dating partner? If your child shares that a friend is being abused, see # 5 below.

You can also share incidences of abuse you know of or have learned about from the news; or share the national statistic that about 1 in 3 teen girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

If your child discloses they have been abused, praise them for speaking up about it and be calm and supportive. Let them do most of the talking, and do not assign blame. Ask how you can help and together explore next steps. (see Resources below)

3) Give your teen the *Signs of an Abusive Person* fact sheet (page 5) or view together online.

Have you witnessed or heard about someone doing any of the behaviors listed on the fact sheet? Which of these signs or behaviors do you think are most serious? Which ones do you think are most common?

Why do you think someone might stay in a relationship with someone who abuses them?

afraid of what the abuser might do if they leave them, they might mistake extreme jealousy or possessiveness as love, they might not want to be alone, they may think they can change the abuser, etc.

4) In what ways could being abused impact someone's life?

they could get injured, make them fearful, isolated, depressed, feel bad about themselves, distracted from schoolwork or other interests, etc.

5) If your friend was in an abusive relationship, what could you do?

let them know what they are experiencing is not ok and I'm concerned, ask how I can help, encourage them to avoid the abusive person, suggest they speak to an adult they trust about it, spend more time with them, involve them in group activities, suggest they call a hotline (see "Resources" below), call 911 if they are in danger, etc.

6) What could you do if your friend was abusing another person?

tell them what they are doing is wrong, talk about the consequences of their actions and my belief they can change, suggest going to a trusted adult for help, tell them I will report it if it doesn't stop, call 911 if the victim is in danger, etc.

7) Have your teen complete the *Am I a Good Boyfriend/Girlfriend* quiz.

[Click here.](#)

It is an excellent way for dating teens to assess their own and their partner's behavior.

III. BOTTOM LINE (wrap up the conversation)

If you experience abuse or have concerns that you may be abusing someone else, you can always talk to me. I will help you.

IV. RESOURCES

- The Sex Abuse Treatment Center (24/7 Hotline: 524-7273) provides information, crisis support and medical care and counseling services for sexual assault survivors and their families. <http://www.satchawaii.org>.
- The Domestic Violence Action Center (Helpline: 531-3771) provides immediate service and support to individuals who are in crisis as a result of intimate partner violence. Crisis support

services are available Monday through Friday from 8:30am until 4:30pm.
<http://www.stoptheviolence.org>

- ****National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline**
866-331-9474
866-331-8453 TTY
The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline offers one-on-one service from peer advocates. The helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offers translation services. Assistance via online chat services is available four p.m. to midnight CST, 7 days a week.
- Do you have concerns that your teen is abusing his or her partner? You may find the following information sheet helpful. *Can I Stop Being Abusive?*
http://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Can_I_Stop_Being_Abusive.pdf
- Breaking the Cycle (<http://www.breakthecycle.org>) is a youth friendly website that engages, educates and empowers young people to establish non-violent, satisfying safe relationships.
- Choose Respect (<http://www.chooserespect.org>) is an interactive website that focuses on pre teens and young teens learning how to develop healthy relationships to prevent dating abuse before it starts. It is a national effort sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Futures Without Violence (<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>) is a highly regarded organization dedicated to addressing sexual and domestic violence. One of its many successful programs is the *Coaching Boys into Men* leadership program for high school athletic coaches. Coaches and non-coaches alike should check out their excellent guide entitled, "8 Ways You Can Coach Boys into Men."

(1) Davis, Antoinette, MPH. 2008. Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus. Available at http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/2008_focus_teen_dating_violence.pdf.

(2) Liz Claiborne Inc. & Family Violence Prevention Fund. 2009. Topline Findings -Teen Relationship Abuse. Teenage Research Unlimited. TRU

(3) Truman, Jennifer and Rand, Michael. 2010. Criminal Victimization, 2009. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv09.pdf>

(4) Rennison, Callie M. August 2000. Criminal victimization 1999: Changes 1998-00 with trends 1993-99. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S Department of Justice.

(5) Snipe, R. et al, "Recidivism in Young Adulthood, Adolescent Sexual Offenders Grown Up," 25 Criminal Justice & Behavior, 109,117, (1998).

(6) Banyard VL, Cross C. Consequences of teen dating violence: Understanding intervening variables in ecological context. *Violence Against Women* 2008; 14(9):998-1013.

(7) Ackard DM, Neumark-Sztainer D. Date violence and date rape among adolescents: Associations with disordered eating behaviors and psychological health. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 2002; 26:455-473.

(8) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students—United States, 2003. *MMWR* 2006; 55:532-535.

(10) Hebert M, Lavoie F, Vitaro F, McDuff P & Tremblay RE. 2008. Association of Child Sexual Abuse and Dating Victimization with Mental Health Disorder in a Sample of Adolescent Girls. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. 21(2): 181-189.

(11) Howard DE & Wang MQ. 2005. Psychosocial Correlates of U.S Adolescents Who Report a History of Forced Sexual Intercourse. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 36:372-3

Signs of an Abusive Person

It is normal to have challenges and conflicts in personal relationships. From time to time there may be arguments, misunderstandings, mistakes and hurt feelings. An abusive relationship, however, is quite different. It is when a partner shows an abusive pattern of disrespect and controlling behavior. It is harmful and can be dangerous.

Common Signs of an abusive person:

- Acts overly possessive (*e.g. constant texting, always wanting to know who you are with and where you are*)
- Shows extreme jealousy
- Makes you feel bad about yourself (*e.g., criticizes your body, your choices, your ideas*)
- Threatens to hurt you
- Forces you into any type of sexual activity (*e.g., touching, intercourse, sexting*)
- Discourages you from spending time with others
- Checks your cell phone or email without permission
- Tells you what to do
- Tells you what to wear
- Disregards your feeling or opinions (*puts his/her needs and wants first*)
- Accuses you of things that aren't true
- Can't control anger (*e.g., easily upset, yells, throws things*)
- Physically abusive (*e.g., pushes, grabs, slaps, punches*)