

Teen Talk: A Parents Guide to Teen Dating



Safety First!

As parents, we are all constantly looking out for a children's safety. It is equally important to look out for their safety as they enter into dating relationships. Getting into a dating relationship can be very exciting, especially for a teenager who has never dated before. However, it can also be a potentially dangerous situation if the teen does not know the warning signs of dating violence. 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 5 boys will experience dating violence in their lifetime.¹ It can affect any teenager regardless of race or income level. Males and females alike can be both victims of dating violence and abusers. Abusive relationships can take on many different forms and a victim may not always show signs of physical abuse. Additionally, nearly half of all boys and girls say the abuse occurs in a school building or on school grounds.

Warning Signs that your teen may be in an unhealthy relationship:

- Excessive phone calls, text messages, emails, MySpace posts, etc.
- Is dating a partner who is intensely jealous or possessive
- Becomes increasingly more isolated from friends and family
- Has a partner who manipulates a lot of his/her free time
- Unexplained bruises, scratches or burns
- Becomes visibly upset after phone calls or hanging out with his/her partner.
- Decline in grades at school
- Sudden changes in behavior

What is Dating Violence?

Teen dating violence is a pattern of controlling, abusive and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It can happen to anyone, regardless of race, gender, age or socioeconomic status. Abusive behaviors may include some of the following:

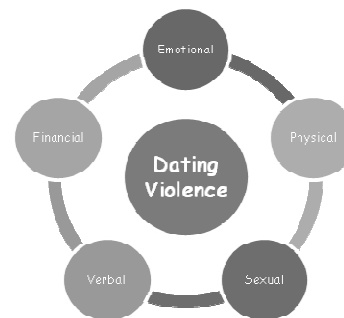
Physical: punching, kicking, slapping, choking, pinching, hair pulling

Verbal: name calling, put downs, threats, spreading rumors

Emotional: Feelings of isolation, fear, worthlessness, low self-esteem

Sexual: pressuring to have sex, rape, forcing unprotected sex, unwanted touching

Financial: forcing a partner to pay, giving an allowance, manipulating pay checks/credit cards



Women In Distress of Broward County, Inc is the only state certified, fully accredited domestic violence agency in Broward County. If you think you teen may be experiencing abuse you can contact Women In Distress through their 24 hour crisis line (954) 761-1133 or visit www.womenindistress.org
www.pledgetoendomesticviolence.org
www.myspace.com/dear_arynn



Dating violence is about one person in a relationship controlling or manipulating another person. Abuse almost always reoccurs. It does not just go away and most abuse gets worse over time.

It is ok to be in a relationship. **It is not ok to be abused in one.**

1. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
2. Carolyn Tucker Halpern, Selene G. Oslak, Mary L. Young, Sandra L. Martin, and Lawrence L. Kupper, "Partner Violence among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health," *American Journal of Public Health* 91, no.10 (October 2001).

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Dear Parents:

Women In Distress of Broward County Inc. recognizes the outstanding prevalence of abusive teenage relationships. Over the next few weeks, Women In Distress will be at your teen's school speaking about healthy relationships and teen dating violence. We have developed a 5 week teen dating violence awareness and prevention curriculum entitled "It's Not Okay". The program is designed to empower students to choose healthy relationships by educating them on the dynamics of teen dating violence from a teenage perspective. Although teenage relationships appear differently than adult relationships, this does not mean that teenagers are free from experiencing abusive relationships. Since half of all boys and girls say that abuse occurs within a school building or on school grounds, we will be educating classrooms of students on dating violence in order to create safer schools.

We encourage you to talk to your teen about what they are learning throughout the program and feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Thank you for helping us talk to your teen about this very important issue.

The Department of Social Change
Women In Distress of Broward County Inc.
954.760.9800 Ext. 1244

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence:

- 1 in 5 teens in a serious relationship report having been hit, slapped or pushed by a partner
- 1 in 4 teenage girls in a relationship report enduring repeated verbal abuse
- Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls report that their boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm when presented with a breakup
- One in four girls who are in a relationship report they are pressured into performing oral sex or engaging in sexual intercourse

Helpful Resources:

Women In Distress of Broward County Inc.
954-760-9800
www.womenindistress.org
24 Hour Crisis Line:
954-761-1133
TDD 954-527-5385

Take the Pledge!
www.pledgetoenddomesticviolence.org

Women In Distress' Teen Dating Violence
Myspace:
www.myspace.com/dear_arynn

www.loveisnotabuse.org
www.ncadv.org

What Can You Do to Help?

As a parent you can be an important resource in preventing and helping a teen get out of an abusive relationship.

- Talk to your teen about behaviors that are a part of healthy relationships and begin to model these behaviors at home.
- Emphasize that abuse is not about love.
- Discuss positive ways to resolve conflict and alternatives to using violence.
- Be involved in your teenager's relationship. Set boundaries and limits that you can uphold.
- Help build your teen's self-esteem and reassure him or her that no one deserves to be abused.
- Become a resource. Educate yourself on teen dating violence and encourage your teen to talk to you about their relationship.