

Teen Dating Violence

The **most prevalent type of violence affecting teens** and young people regardless of age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation **is dating violence.**



February is nationally recognized as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

In February, we bring awareness to this **form of violence that impacts all students** whether they are victims, the person causing harm, bystanders, or friends.

Dating Violence is a serious public health issue that **affects millions of young people every year.**

Any teen can experience dating violence.

Boys, girls, trans and nonbinary students of all races can experience dating violence, regardless of the neighborhoods where they live, how much money their parents make, or how good of a student/athlete/musician/etc. they are.

However, **teen girls, Black, indigenous, and teens of color, as well as LGBTQ+ teens are at a higher risk of experiencing dating violence.**

Any teen who experiences dating violence is more likely to experience other negative outcomes such as: **depression and anxiety, suicidal thoughts, lying and theft, bullying, eating disorders, using substances.**

Additionally, teens who experience dating violence are more likely to have other violent relationships later in life.

Why does this matter?

1 in 3 teens is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner

Every year nearly 1.5 million high school students are physically abused by their partner

Youth who experience dating violence have a higher risk of poor school performance, eating disorders, school absences, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

1 in 3 homicides in girls 11-18 is committed by an intimate partner

* Center for Disease Control, Children's hospital of Philadelphia, Futureswithoutviolence.org



What is Teen Dating Violence?



For teens, **abusive behavior frequently happens at school or in online spaces**, so it may be difficult for adults to notice or pick up on abusive behaviors. No matter where it happens, teens experience relationship violence much like adults do.

Typically, abusive behavior starts with verbal and emotional abusive behaviors and escalates from there. No type of abuse is ok.

Teens experience **verbal and emotional abuse** such as:

- Threats
- Put downs
- **Isolation**
- Manipulation
- **Jealousy**
- **Possessiveness**
- Shaming
- **Name Calling**
- Pressuring partner to be *out* or *closeted*
- Humiliating or Embarrassing
- Obsession
- **Love bombing**
- Intimidating
- Using privilege

Teens experience **economic* abuse** such as:

- Interrupting, derailing or making a partner feel guilty about study/school/activity time
- Keeping a partner awake so they are unable to function at work/school the next day
- Insisting a **partner buy something for the other or they will break up** with them
- If a teen has a job, a partner may show up at their job and “hang out”, or try to get them fired, or says the partner must check in throughout their shift
- **Damaging or destroying items needed for school or work**; papers or projects, books, electronic devices, homework, instruments, athletic uniforms, dance shoes, etc.

**Teens often don't have as much access to money, so economic abuse may look a little different and appear in the form of abuse of resources and time.*

Teens experience **sexual abuse** such as:

- **Unwanted comments about their body** (including seemingly positive ones)
- Sharing intimate photos/videos without permission
- Pressuring into sexual contact or acts they aren't comfortable with
- Not getting consent, disregarding consent, pressuring into “consenting”

Teens experience **physical abuse** such as:

- Hitting/ Kicking/ Slapping
- Pinching or biting
- Punching
- Pushing and Shoving
- Spitting
- Restraining
- Choking/strangulation
- Hair pulling



Are you in an Abusive relationship?

It is important to remember, **it is never someone's fault if they find themselves in an abusive relationship.**

It is not always easy to tell at the beginning of a relationship if someone is going to cause harm later. And, because no one is intentionally seeking an abusive relationship, a relationship can often start out feeling relatively safe.

There are a lot of **complicated and conflicting feelings, including love,** within an abusive relationship. These complicated and conflicting feelings make it difficult for someone to determine if their relationship is abusive and makes it difficult for them to decide if they want to leave that relationship.



If you are trying to determine if you or a friend is in an abusive relationship, ask yourself these questions about the person you are dating:

- Do they treat you well?
- Do they respect you?
- Do they respect what you feel comfortable doing sexually?
- Do they give you space?
- Do you feel safe?
- Are you able to be yourself?
- Is there trust between you?
- Can you wear what you want without them getting upset?
- Do they give you space to hang out with your friends?
- Are you able to make your own decisions?
- Do you spend time apart doing separate things each of you enjoy?

These are “green flag behaviors,” and answering yes to these questions indicates You or your friend are in a safe and healthy relationship.

Everyone, regardless of age, gender identity, race, culture, faith, income, how/where they grew up, etc., has the right to experience healthy relationships. A healthy dating relationship or friendship should include the following qualities and behaviors:

- Good Communication
- Boundaries
- Freedom & Independence
- Privacy
- Conflict
- Happy & Fun
- Equality
- Safety
- Trust
- Loyalty
- Consent
- Choice
- Honesty
- Respect
- Love
- Shared values
- Ability to be yourself
- Commitment to the relationship
- Space and “me” time
- Quality time
- Choice



Consider some of the bad days in your relationship and ask yourself the following questions:

- Do they shame you or make you feel stupid?
- Do they get jealous of you and/or your time? Does the jealousy feel over the top?
- Have they ever grabbed you or pushed/shoved you when they were angry or frustrated?
- Do you feel trapped or like you have no way out?
- Have they ever threatened to hurt themselves if you did or didn't do something they wanted, or if you broke up with them?
- Have they ever threatened to share something about you or your relationship with others that is private?
- Do they embarrass or humiliate you in front of others? Do they then laugh it off like it's no big deal?
- Do they make you question your reality or make you feel like you're "crazy" or "too sensitive"?
- Do you ever find yourself making excuses for them or explaining their behavior to a friend?
- Do they apologize for the behaviors but continue to do the same things?
- Do you find yourself apologizing or taking responsibility for things you didn't really do?
- Do you feel like you're walking on eggshells around them?
- Are you fearful of how they will react to something?

These are "red flag behaviors" and more than likely indicate you or your friend is in an unsafe and dangerous relationship.

No one deserves to be treated this way.



Talking to Adults about Dating Violence

If unsafe and dangerous behavior is happening in your relationship or you see it happening to a friend, talk to a safe adult who will listen to you and who you know will believe you.

Tell them:

- I need to tell you something, but I don't need advice. I just need support.
- I'm not sure where else to turn and I need someone who will listen and help.
- I'm scared or worried.
- I feel like I am trapped or there is no way out.
- Someone is threatening me/my friend. I don't know if the threats are "real" but I'm scared.
- I feel alone and isolated. No one seems to care and/or no one believes me.
- I need help and I don't know what to do.
- I'm worried about getting someone in trouble, but I have to tell someone what is happening.

Talking to Teens about Dating Violence

Talk to the teens and young people in your life about their relationships, be curious! Don't ignore their dating relationships or brush them off as "young love" or not a "real enough" or "mature enough" relationships to be concerned about.



Ask them:

- How is your relationship? Do you feel supported, safe and happy?
- What are the qualities of this relationship that make it feel so good/healthy?
- What do you like to do together or talk about?
- Tell me how your partner supports you and is your cheerleader?

If you are worried about the relationship, ask and say:

- Is this person hurting you? Calling you names? Making you feel less than? Making you feel guilty or shameful? Pressuring you into doing things you're not comfortable with?
- Are *you* worried about this relationship or your safety?
- I love you and I'm worried about you.
- I want to understand what you are feeling and experiencing. I will try not to judge you.
- I'm here to listen to you and support you. I just want you to be safe.



If you or your teen is experiencing dating violence,

You Are Not Alone.

There are many resources available for support and more information.

Rochester and Monroe County:

- Willow's 24/7, Confidential, Hotline
 - Call or Text: 585-222-7233
 - Secure webchat:
willowcenterny.org
- The Center for Youth (Rochester, NY)
 - Hotline: 585-271-7670

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, 24/7

- Call: 1-866-331-9474
- Text: 'LOVEIS' to 22522



Learn more about Dating Violence:

- Dating Violence red flags and Healthy Relationships at Loveisrespect.org

- [Make a safety plan](#)
- Learn more about (link to videos from staff that we make...TBD)

Further Reading for Teens (click the links):

- [How to talk to your parents about abuse.](#)
- [Does Your Partner Respect Your No?](#)
- [Can I Kiss you?](#)

Further Reading for Adults

- [Teen Dating Abuse Warning Signs](#)
- [Talking to Your Teen About Dating and Sex](#)
- [What to Do If Your Teen or Adult Child is Abusive](#)

