About Teen Dating Violence

Break the Cycle

Empowering Youth to End Domestic Violence

breakthecycle.org
loveisrespect.org
facebook.com/breakthecycle

Dating Violence **is a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.**

Dating Relationship **means a romantic or intimate social relationship between two individuals.**

Break the Cycle **engages, educates and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.**

Domestic violence is not a problem just for adults. Teens experience domestic violence in their relationships, too. In fact, domestic violence is very common in teen dating relationships. Here are some important facts:

- One in three teens experience some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse.[1]
- 40% of teenage girls, ages 14 to 17, know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by their partner.[2]
- Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser.[3]
- 1 in 4 teenage girls who have been in relationships reveal they have been pressured to perform oral sex or engage in intercourse.[4]

What do I need to know?

Recognizing abuse in a relationship is difficult, but especially for teens. There are many types of abuse that teens often believe are not abusive or are normal in a relationship. Even though teen relationships may be different from adult relationships in many ways, teens do experience the same types of physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse that adults do.

Teens also face unique obstacles if they decide to get help. Unlike many adults, teens may not have money, transportation, or safe places to go. They may have concerns about lack of confidentiality, reports to police and child protective services, and parental notification. But teens do have rights to a safe and healthy relationship. In some states, teens may apply for restraining or protective orders and get domestic violence services without the help of a parent or guardian.

What can I do?

If you or someone you know is experiencing teen dating violence, consider these steps:

- Learn about dating and domestic violence and what the laws in your state say about teen victims of domestic violence.
- Share information you learn with your peers.
- Support your friends and family members to stay safe in their relationships.
- Speak out in your community to end teen dating violence.

For more information, you can visit **loveisrespect.org.**

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References

[1] Carolyn Tucker Halpern, Ph.D. et al., "Partner Violence Among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: Findings From the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health." *American Journal of Public Health* 91 (2001) 1680.

[2] Children Now/Kaiser Permanente "National Poll on Kids Health and Safety," December 1995.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Liz Claiborne Inc. study on teen dating abuse conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited, February 2005.

Quiz: Is Your Relationship Healthy?

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Everyone deserves to be in a safe and healthy relationship. Do you know if your relationship is as healthy as you deserve? Answer "yes" or "no" to the following statements to find out! Make sure to circle your responses. At the end you'll find out how to score your answers.

The person I am with:		**Circle One**	
1.	Is very supportive of things that I do.	Y	N
2.	Encourages me to try new things.	Y	N
3.	Likes to listen when I have something on my mind.	Y	N
4.	Understands that I have my own life too.	Y	N
5.	Is not liked very well by my friends.	Y	N
6.	Says I'm too involved in different activities.	Y	N
7.	Texts me or calls me all the time.	Y	N
8.	Thinks I spend too much time trying to look nice.	Y	N
9.	Gets extremely jealous or possessive.	Y	N
10.	Accuses me of flirting or cheating.	Y	N
11.	Constantly checks up on me or makes me check in.	Y	N
12.	Controls what I wear or how I look.	Y	N
13.	Tries to control what I do and who I see.	Y	N
14.	Tries to keep me from seeing or talking to my family and friends.	Y	N
15.	Has big mood swings - gets angry and yells at me one minute, and the next minute is sweet and apologetic.	Y	N
16.	Makes me feel nervous or like I'm "walking on eggshells."	Y	N
17.	Puts me down, calls me names or criticizes me.	Y	N
18.	Makes me feel like I can't do anything right or blames me for problems.	Y	N
19.	Makes me feel like no one else would want me.	Y	N
20.	Threatens to hurt me, my friends or family.	Y	N
21.	Threatens to hurt him or herself because of me.	Y	N
22.	Threatens to destroy my things.	Y	N
23.	Grabs, pushes, shoves, chokes, punches, slaps, holds me down, throws things or hurts me in some way.	Y	N
24.	Breaks things or throws things to intimidate me.	Y	N
25.	Yells, screams or humiliates me in front of other people.	Y	N
26.	Pressures or forces me into having sex or going farther than I want to.	Y	N

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Scoring:

Give yourself 1 point for every "no" you answered to numbers 1-4; 1 point for every "yes" response to numbers 5-8; and 5 points for every "yes" to numbers 9-26.

Now that you're finished and have your score, the next step is to find out what your score means. Simply take your total score and see which of the boxes below applies to you.

Score: 0 points

You got a score of 0? Don't worry—it's a good thing! It sounds like your relationship is on a pretty healthy track. Maintaining healthy relationships takes some work—keep it up! Remember that while you may have a healthy relationship, it's possible that a friend of yours may not. If you think you know someone who may be in an abusive relationship, find out how you can help that person end the abuse.

Score: 1-2 points

If you scored 1 or 2 points, you might be noticing a couple of things in your relationship that could be unhealthy, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are warning signs. It's still a good idea to keep an eye on them to make sure there isn't a pattern. The best thing to do is to talk to your partner and let them know what you like and don't like. Encourage them to do the same. Remember, communication is always important when building a healthy relationship. It's also good to be informed so that you learn to recognize the warning signs. Break the Cycle can give you information about teen dating violence and the different types of abuse there may be.

Score: 3-4 points

If you scored 3 or 4 points, it sounds like you may be seeing some warning signs of an abusive relationship. Warning signs should never be ignored. Something that starts small can grow much worse over time. No relationship is perfect – it takes some work! But in a healthy relationship you won't find abusive behaviors. If you think your relationship may not be as healthy as you deserve, contact us for help and to get more information.

Score: 5 points or more

If you scored 5 points or more, you are definitely seeing warning signs and may be in an abusive relationship. You don't have to deal with this alone. Break the Cycle can help. We can talk to you about your different options and legal rights.

For more information, you can visit loveisrespect.org.

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Ask your community to recognize Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month!

Ask your mayor, governor, school principal, faith leader or other public official to issue a proclamation recognizing Teen DV Month in your community. We have everything you need to get started. If your request is successful, make sure to write a thank you letter and invite a representative from the official's office to any event you host for Teen DV Month. If you highlight the proclamation in your website or newsletter, send a copy of that too.

Instructions: Copy and paste the proclamation below into a separate document to mail or email your elected officials!

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH, February 2012
A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, females between the ages 16-24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, experiencing abuse at a rate almost triple the national average; and

WHEREAS, one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner, a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth; and

WHEREAS, high school students who experience physical violence in a dating relationship are more likely to use drugs and alcohol, are at greater risk of suicide and are much more likely to carry patterns of abuse into future relationships; and

WHEREAS, young people victimized by a dating partner are more likely to engage in risky sexual behavior and unhealthy dieting behaviors and the experience may disrupt normal development of self-esteem and body image; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of teens who experience dating violence report that incidents of abuse took place in a school building or on school grounds; and

WHEREAS, only 33% of teens who are in an abusive relationship ever tell anyone about the abuse, and 81% of parents surveyed either believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they do not know if it is one; and

WHEREAS, by providing young people with education about healthy relationships and relationship skills and by changing attitudes that support violence, we recognize that dating violence can be prevented; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to raise community awareness and to provide training for teachers, counselors and school staff so that they may recognize when youth are exhibiting signs of dating violence; and

WHEREAS, the establishment of Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Month will benefit young people, their families, schools and communities regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity; and

WHEREAS, everyone has the right to a safe and healthy relationship and to be free from abuse.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **[Official's name]**, **[Official's Title (e.g. Governor, Mayor, Superintendent, Sheriff)]** of **[Location or Organization (e.g. Arkansas, Carteret County, Washington High School)]**, do hereby proclaim February 2012, Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Month, throughout **[Location or Organization]**. I urge all **[national focus (e.g. Americans)/state focus (e.g. Californians)/local focus (e.g. Baltimorians)]** to work toward ending teen dating violence by empowering young people to develop healthier relationships, assisting victims in accessing the information and supportive services they need, creating better and more resources for young people in need, instituting effective intervention and prevention policies in schools and engaging in discussions with family members and peers to promote awareness and prevention of the quiet epidemic of teen dating violence.