

Dating Violence Prevention Resource Guide

What you need to know

- Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.
- Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence — almost triple the national average.
- Though 82% of parents feel confident that they could recognize the signs if their child was experiencing dating abuse, 58% could not correctly identify all the warning signs of abuse.

The signs a child/teenager/adult may be in an unhealthy relationship

- Pulling away. Engaging less with family or with friends. Spending all the time with their partner.
- Constantly fighting with partner, always in tears.
- Dressing differently.
- Long-sleeve shirts/sweaters to hide bruises.
- Moody, or depressed.
- Grades dropping, less active in school.
- Panics at the thought of upsetting their partner.
- You notice their partner is extremely jealous and possessive.
- Excessive texting.

It might sound like:

“I need to tell [...] where I am.”

“I can’t wear this. [...] won’t like it.”

“[...] got me this amazing new phone.”

“I can’t hang out this weekend. I’ll be with [...] all weekend.”

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What a parent or bystander should do

- Stop and listen. Be present and give support.
- Let them know it is not their fault and that no one deserves to be abused.²
- Accept what your child/friend is telling you.
- It will be hard to believe them. Believe them. Showing skepticism could make them hesitant to talk to you. ²
- Show concern.
- Let them know you are concerned by saying things like, “You don’t deserve to be treated like this,” and “You deserve to be in a relationship where you are treated with respect.” ²
- Talk about the behaviors, not the person.
- Instead of saying, “She is controlling you” you could say, “I don’t like that she texts you to see where you are.” Talking badly about their partner may discourage them from asking for your help in the future. ²
- Stick by their side for as long as it takes.
- It can take over 7 times to leave an abusive partner. Be patient.
- Speak to law enforcement, if needed.
- Seek professional help, if needed.

What a parent or bystander should avoid

- Blaming the victim. “What did you do wrong? How could you let this happen?”
- The victim already thinks this is all of their fault because of the abuser. Reassure them that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it.
- Reinforcing the abuser’s behavior by saying things like: “How could you be so stupid? You’re crazy if you don’t break up with them!”
- Avoid using accusatory language and any harsh language that paints the victim negatively. This is the time to build them up, not put them down.
- Don’t cut them out or give ultimatums. Ultimatums can very likely to push victim towards abuser
- Be patient. Violent dating relationships are immensely challenging to leave and it takes time. It takes about 7-9 times to successfully leave an unhealthy relationship.

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What our plays and discussions teach your kids

- To recognize the early signs of an unhealthy relationship and dating violence for the victim and bystander
- Learn about the abuse cycle so you can recognize it
- Learn what you should and shouldn't do as a bystander
- Understand why victims stay in relationships
- Learn techniques for safely ending abusive relationships
- Understanding that staying in an abusive relationship can be fatal

Other Resources & Sources

- Crisistextline.org (or text: 741741)
- Loveisrespect.org
- Thehotline.org (National Domestic Hotline: 1800-799-7233)
- Myplanapp.org – An app that can help you determine if your relationship is healthy or not
- Noonlight.com – An app that can help you stay safe

1. <https://loveisrespect.org/resources/dating-violence-statistics/>
2. <https://loveisrespect.org/for-someone-esle/help-my-child/>
3. <https://stopbullying.gov/media/facts/index.html#stats>
4. <https://stompoutbullying.org/get-help/parents-page/tip-sheet-your-child-being-bullied>

