

Teen Dating Violence

Definition

Teen dating violence can be defined as “repeated acts or threats to physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally abuse one partner by the other partner in a dating relationship”. Teen dating violence can occur in both heterosexual and homosexual couples between the ages of 13-20.

Statistics

- Studies show that one in four women will be abused in her lifetime by a dating partner.
- About one in three high school students have been or will be involved in an abusive relationship.
- Women ages 16-24 experience the highest per capita rates of intimate violence (nearly 20 per 1,000 women).
- Approximately 1 in 5 female high school students report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. (Journal of Amer. Medical Assoc., 2001)
- Half of the reported date rapes occur among teenagers. (CALCASA 2002 Report)
- Only 33% of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse. (Liz Claiborne, Inc., 2005)

Dynamics of Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence tends to begin with jealousy and extreme possessiveness and is characterized by the need of one partner to control every aspect of the other partner's life. Although both men and women may act abusively, the abuse of women by men is more pervasive and usually more severe. Dating violence is a pattern of controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power in the relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in a way that may cause fear, degradation, and humiliation to control the other person.

Types of Abuse

Physical - Typically, men use physical force to assert control while young women use it to protect themselves, because they fear that their partner is about to assault them.

Verbal - The point of verbal abuse is to help break down a partner's self-esteem, so they feel worthless. This limits their ability to act independently.

Sexual - Is more often directed at women. While each of these acts is emotionally draining, they vary in the extent to which they result in physical injury.

Emotional - Originates in the aggressor's desire to control the other person's behavior. Both men and women may use emotional abuse. Society, however, too often downplays the effects of emotional abuse because there is no visible harm.

Recommendations for Teens

- Respect yourself and respect others.
- Don't be silent about teen dating violence.
- If you suspect someone is a victim, encourage them to find help. Support them to tell someone they trust.
- Without being judgmental, listen, so you can find out what the problem is.
- Help the victim realize that there is a problem.
- Tell the victim they "deserve respect".
- Give the victim sincere compliments to help restore their self-confidence.
- Tell the victim, "It's not your fault".

Recommendations for Parents

- Spend quality time with your teen.
- Talk to your teen daily - ask them about their day.
- Be willing to hear the good and the bad about your teen.

- It's okay if young people get mad when you ask question - Don't stop asking. But don't badger your teen or their friends for information or answers.
- Give your child space to grow and discover who they are, but don't close your eyes and ears completely.
- Give your teen positive feedback, help them feel good about themselves, and build up your teen's confidence.
- Be comfortable talking about "uncomfortable" subjects. If you're not, become comfortable by getting the necessary information and becoming educated.
- Start talking to your kids about healthy relationships when you first notice their interest in serious dating. Educate them about their rights and responsibilities as a teen who is beginning to date.
- Communicate to your male and female children that both sexes are equal.
- Just because you know the other family, don't assume everything is okay between your teen and their boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Don't tell your teen "no", or not to do something "because I said so" with no explanation.
- Get educated on the extreme warning signs of teen dating violence.
- Talk to your kid's teacher because they may confide to a teacher they trust.
- Talk to other parents in the community about what kids are doing.

Where You Can Turn...Sources of Help and Info

- National Domestic Violence Hotline
 - o 1-800-799-SAFE
- Shelter House, Inc.
 - o 850-863-4777 or 1-800-44ABUSE
- Youth Crisis Line
 - o 1-800-448-4663
- Center for Disease Control National STD Hotline

- 1-800-227-8922

Websites:

www.ondatingsmart.com

(password Gooddate) for talks, tips and more

www.teenrelationships.org

(Run by teens, for teens)

www.chooserrespect.org

(Create your own music video about teen dating violence)

www.seeitandstopit.org

www.safeyouth.org

(Provides articles, activities and facts about teen dating violence)

www.womenslaw.org

(Facts, legal information for teens and resources)

www.loveisnotabuse.org

(Works with Liz Claiborne, Inc. to end domestic violence by focusing on Teen Dating Violence)

www.ndvh.org

(National Domestic Violence Hotline website)

www.endabuse.org