



What YOU Need to Know About Teen Dating Abuse

Dating abuse (or relationship abuse) is a **pattern of controlling behavior** that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend.

Abuse can cause injury and even death, but it **doesn't have to be physical**. It can include verbal and emotional abuse - constant insults, isolation from family and friends, name calling, controlling what someone wears - and it can also include sexual abuse.

Did You Know?

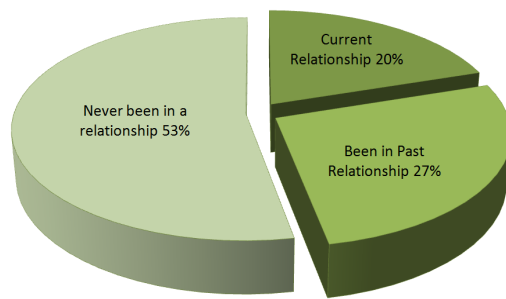
- **One in eleven** youth reports being a victim of physical dating abuse.
- **One in five** high school girls has been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.
- **One in four** adolescents reports verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year.
- **Only 33%** of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.
- **One in three** teens reports knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped or physically hurt by their dating partner.

Recognizing the Signs

Teens experiencing abuse may:

- Make **changes** in their daily rituals.
- Become **pregnant** or their partner may become pregnant.
- **Retreat** from school or activities.
- Become **isolated** from friends.
- **Fear not** being able to go out with or contact their partner.
- Become **depressed, anxious**, and have **low self-esteem**.
- **Change** their clothing style.
- Be **verbally abused**, such as being the object of name-calling and demeaning comments, which they may overhear.
- Have **visible marks or bruises**.
- Spend **excessive** amounts of time with the person they're dating or receive constant calls, emails, and texts.

Dating Relationships Begin Much Earlier Than Expected . . . Twins' (ages 11-14) Relationship Status



47% of Tweens
have been in a
Dating
Relationship

So . . . Talk to the Young People in Your Life Early and Often

- Talk to children from an early age and continually about healthy relationships.
- Provide teens with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behaviors. Use examples from your own life, television, movies, or music.
- Go for a drive or a walk to spark a private conversation.
- Be supportive and non-judgmental so they know they can come to you for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future.
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that violence is never acceptable.

What You Can Do to Help Abused Teens

- Open up clear channels of communication. When teens talk, give them your undivided attention.
- Be supportive and understanding. No one deserves to be abused and abuse is never the victim's fault.
- Tell your teen that you are concerned for his or her safety. Abuse usually becomes more frequent and more severe over time.
- Remember, your teen must be the one to make the choice to leave the relationship.
- Help develop a plan. Can you contact the school to change his or her class schedule? Can you arrange for different transportation or other after-school options?
- Contact a local domestic violence program to get support, counseling, and legal information.
- Assist in filing a petition for a peace order from the court to help stop the abuse.

Find Help and Resources

MNADV Maryland Helpline: 1-800-MD-HELPS or www.mnadv.org/children_teens.htm

Love is Respect: National Teen Dating Violence Helpline 1-866-331-9474 or Online chat www.loveisrespect.org

Love is Not Abuse: www.loveisnotabuse.com.

Break the Cycle: www.breakthecycle.org and teen site www.thesafespace.org.

That's Not Cool: www.thatstnotcool.com