

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEEN DATING ABUSE

Teens and young adults are the most at-risk age groups for dating and domestic violence. Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, almost triple the national average (LovesRespect.org).

Dating violence can be especially concerning because young people are often new to relationships, they may be more trusting or impulsive and may not have learned what healthy relationships look like. This vulnerability may end up being exploited by an abusive partner, which is why it's so important for teens, and their parents or caregivers, to learn and talk about relationships!

It's Never Too Early!

Starting the conversation about healthy relationships early on with your child can have a positive impact on their relationships later in life. Your child's life is filled with relationships. Regardless of their age, your child should know that they are worthy of healthy relationships with everyone in their life, including friends, siblings, teammates or dating partners.

You can talk about and model these characteristics of healthy relationships with the young people in your life:

- Equality and shared power
- Open and honest communication
- Setting and respecting boundaries
- Trusting and supporting each other

Modeling positive, healthy relationships can be a powerful way to set an example and reinforce the belief that everyone deserves to have safe, healthy relationships!

RED FLAGS PARENTS MAY SEE

Unfortunately, many teens experience unhealthy and abusive relationships. Parents or caregivers may notice signs of dating violence before their child does.

The signs could look like...

- Losing interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Becoming more critical of themselves
- Becoming increasingly secretive and unwilling to share things with you
- Changing their appearance in a way that seems out of character
- Onset or increased depression or anxiety
- Apologizing for, minimizing or excusing their partner's concerning behavior
- Moving quickly in the relationship (talks of being in love or "soulmates," moving in together, marriage or even wanting to start a family soon into the relationship)
- Expressing their partner has jealousy issues
- Needing to be constantly in communication with their partner
- Becoming isolated and distant from you and their friends

Supporting Your Child

If you suspect that your child is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, you may be upset, frightened or frustrated. Your instinct may be to try to get your child out of their relationship as quickly as possible. However, ending an abusive relationship is complicated, and making a decision on your child's behalf could have negative consequences.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when supporting your child:

- Listen non-judgmentally
- Accept what your child is telling you
- Focus on the behaviors rather than the person involved
- Avoid ultimatums, decide on next steps together

You don't have to have all the answers. There are many resources available to help with these difficult situations and conversations.

Visit LevelsRespect.org or TheHotline.org for more information!

According to one survey, 82% of parents felt confident that they could recognize the signs of dating abuse, but less than half could.



WCA 24-HOUR HOTLINE - 208.343.7025

**LOVE IS RESPECT - 866.331.9474
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