

PREVENT & REPAIR UPDATE

August 2009

The Wellness Group, Inc.

Employee Assistance Program

DATING VIOLENCE AND YOUTH



Teenagers often experience violence in dating relationships. Statistics show that one in three teenagers has experienced violence in a dating relationship. In dating violence, one partner tries to maintain power and control over the other through abuse. Dating violence crosses all racial, economic and social lines. Most victims are young women, who are also at greater risk for serious injury. Young women need a dating safety plan.

Teen dating violence often is hidden because teenagers typically:

- ◆ Are inexperienced with dating relationships.
- ◆ Are pressured by peers to act violently.
- ◆ Want independence from parents.
- ◆ Have “romantic” views of love.

Teen dating violence is influenced by how teenagers look at themselves and others.

Young men may believe:

- ◆ They have the right to “control” their female partners in any way necessary.
- ◆ “Masculinity” is physical aggressiveness.
- ◆ They “possess” their partner.
- ◆ They should demand intimacy.
- ◆ They may lose respect if they are attentive and supportive toward their girlfriends.

Young women may believe:

- ◆ They are responsible for solving problems in their relationships.
- ◆ Their boyfriend’s jealousy, possessiveness and even physical abuse, is “romantic.”

- ◆ Abuse is “normal” because their friends are also being abused.
- ◆ There is no one to ask for help. Teenagers can choose better relationships when they learn to identify the early warning signs of an abusive relationship. Understand that they have choices, and believe they are valuable people who deserve to be treated with respect.

Early warning signs that your date may eventually become abusive:

- ◆ Extreme jealousy
- ◆ Controlling behavior
- ◆ Quick involvement
- ◆ Unpredictable mood swings
- ◆ Alcohol and drug use
- ◆ Explosive anger
- ◆ Isolates you from friends and family
- ◆ Uses force during an argument
- ◆ Shows hypersensitivity
- ◆ Believes in rigid sex roles
- ◆ Blames others for his problems or feelings
- ◆ Cruel to animals or children
- ◆ Verbally abusive
- ◆ Abused former partners
- ◆ Threatens violence

Common clues that indicate a teenager may be experiencing dating violence:

- ◆ Physical signs of injury
- ◆ Truancy, dropping out of school
- ◆ Failing grades
- ◆ Indecision
- ◆ Changes in mood or personality
- ◆ Use of drugs/alcohol
- ◆ Pregnancy

- ◆ Emotional outbursts
- ◆ Isolation

Help is available for teenagers

If you are a teenager involved in an abusive relationship, you need to remember that no one deserves to be abused or threatened. Remember you cannot change your batterer, and in time the violence will get worse. You need to take care of yourself. Talk to a trusted adult or locate a shelter or agency serving victims of domestic abuse in your community. Call the EAP. Together, you can talk about making a plan to end the relationship and remain safe.

More help

The website loveisrespect.org is a 24 hour resource that utilizes telephone and web-based interactive technology to reach teens and young adults experiencing dating abuse. The National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline numbers are: (866) 331-9474 and TTY (866) 331-8453. The peer to peer online individual chat function is available from 4 p.m. to midnight and can be accessed from the website.

Dating Safety

- ◆ Consider double-dating the first few times you go out with a new person.
- ◆ Before leaving on a date, know the exact plans for the evening and make sure a parent or friend knows these plans and what time to expect you home. Let your date know that you are expected to call or tell that person when you get in.

(continued on page 2)

E A P 1 - 8 0 0 - 3 3 6 - 1 4 9 1

- ◆ Be aware of your decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- ◆ If you leave a party with someone you do not know well, make sure you tell another person you are leaving and with whom. Ask a friend to call and make sure you arrived home safely.
- ◆ Assert yourself when necessary. Be firm and straightforward in your relationships.
- ◆ Trust your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, try to be calm and think of a way to remove yourself from the situation.

Safety Planning for Teens

You should think ahead about ways to be safe if you are in a dangerous or potentially dangerous relationship. Here are some things to consider in designing your own safety plan.

- ◆ What adults can you tell about the violence and abuse?
- ◆ What people at school can you tell in order to be safe—teachers, principal, counselors, security?
- ◆ Consider changing your school locker or lock.
- ◆ Consider changing your route to/from school.
- ◆ Use a buddy system for going to school, classes and after school activities.
- ◆ What friends can you tell to help you remain safe?
- ◆ If stranded, who could you call for a ride home?
- ◆ Keep a journal describing the abuse.
- ◆ Get rid of or change the number to any cell phones the abuser gave you.

- ◆ Keep spare change, calling cards, number of the local shelter, number of someone who could help you and restraining orders with you at all times.
- ◆ Where could you go quickly to get away from an abusive person?
- ◆ What other things can you do?

Women ages 16 to 24 experience the highest per capita rates of intimate violence — nearly 20 per 1,000 women.

Teen Dating Statistics

- ◆ About one in three high school students have been or will be involved in an abusive relationship.
- ◆ Forty percent of teenage girls age 14 to 17 say they know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.
- ◆ In one study, from 30 to 50 percent of female high school students reported having already experienced teen dating violence.
- ◆ Teen dating violence most often takes place in the home of one of the partners.
- ◆ One in five or 20 percent of dating couples report some type of violence in their relationship.
- ◆ One in five college females will experience some form of dating violence.
- ◆ A survey of 500 young women, ages 15 to 24, found that 60 percent were currently involved in an ongoing abusive relationship and all participants had experienced violence in a dating relationship.
- ◆ One study found that 38 percent of date rape victims were young women from 14 to 17 years of age.
- ◆ A survey of adolescent and college

- ◆ students revealed that date rape accounted for 67 percent of sexual assaults.
- ◆ More than half of young women raped (68 percent) knew their rapist either as a boyfriend, friend or casual acquaintance.
- ◆ Six out of 10 rapes of young women occur in their own home or a friend or relative's home, not in a dark alley.

Dating Bill of Rights

I have a right to:

- ◆ Ask for a date
- ◆ Refuse a date
- ◆ Suggest activities
- ◆ Refuse any activities, even if my date is excited about them
- ◆ Have my own feelings and be able to express them
- ◆ Say, "I think my friend is wrong and his actions are inappropriate"
- ◆ Tell someone not to interrupt me
- ◆ Have my limits and values respected
- ◆ Tell my partner when I need affection
- ◆ Refuse affection
- ◆ Be heard
- ◆ Refuse to lend money
- ◆ Refuse sex any time, for any reason
- ◆ Have friends and space aside from my partner

I have the responsibility to:

- ◆ Determine my limits and values
- ◆ Respect the limits of others
- ◆ Communicate clearly and honestly
- ◆ Not violate the limits of others
- ◆ Ask for help when I need it
- ◆ Be considerate
- ◆ Check my actions and decisions to determine whether they are good or bad for me
- ◆ Set high goals for myself

Source: Domestic Violence Advocacy Program of Family Resources, Inc.; Delaware Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Rose Haven Center for Domestic Violence; Bureau of Justice Report: Intimate Partner Violence

EAP REMINDER

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential program available to employees and their family members who are facing problems of daily living. Any employee may have difficulty coping with children, family members, finances, marital problems, stress, substance abuse, etc. Your EAP can help.

Paola Melara De Sandre, PhD, EDITOR