

Teen Dating Violence

Dating violence or abuse affect one in four teens. Abuse isn't just hitting. It's yelling, threatening, name calling, saying "I'll kill myself if you leave me," obsessive phone calling or paging, and extreme possessiveness.



Are you going out with someone who...

- is jealous and possessive, won't let you have friends, checks up on you or won't accept breaking up?
- tries to control you by being bossy, giving orders, making all the decisions or not taking your opinion seriously?
- puts you down in front of friends or tells you that you would be nothing without him or her?
- scares you? Makes you worry about reactions to things you say or do? Threatens you? Uses or owns weapons?
- is violent? Has a history of fighting, loses his or her temper quickly, brags about mistreating others? Grabs, pushes, shoves, or hits you?
- pressures you for sex or is forceful or scary about sex? Gets too serious about the relationship too fast?
- abuses alcohol or other drugs and pressures you to use them?
- has a history of failed relationships and always blames the other person for all of the problems?
- believes that he or she should be in control of the relationship?
- makes your family and friends uneasy and concerned for your safety?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you could be a victim of dating abuse. Both males and females can be victims of dating violence, as can partners in heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

What if Your Partner Is Abusing You and You Want Out?

- Don't put up with abuse. You deserve better.
- Know that you are not alone. Teens from all different backgrounds across the country are involved in or have been involved in a violent relationship.
- Understand that you have done nothing wrong. It is not your fault.
- Know that the longer you stay in the abusive relationship, the more intense the violence will become.
- Recognize that being drunk is not an excuse for someone to become abusive.
- Talk with your parents, a friend, a counselor, a faith leader or spiritual leader, or someone else you trust. The more isolated you are from friends and family, the more control the abuser has over you.
- Know that you can get help from professionals at rape crisis centers, health services, counseling centers, or your family's health care provider.
- Alert a school counselor or security officer about the abuse.
- Keep a daily log of the abuse for evidence.
- Remember that no one is justified in attacking you just because he or she is angry.
- Do not meet him or her alone. Do not let him or her in your home or car when you are alone.
- Avoid being alone at school, your job, or on the way to and from places.
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Plan and rehearse what you will do if he or she becomes abusive.

How To Be a Friend to a Victim of Dating Violence

Most teens talk to other teens about their problems. If a friend tells you things that sound like his or her relationship is abusive, here are some suggestions on ways to help.

- Don't ignore signs of abuse. Talk to your friend.
- Express your concerns. Tell your friend you're worried. Support, don't judge.
- Point out your friend's strengths — many people in abusive relationships are no longer capable of seeing their own abilities and gifts.

- Encourage your friend to confide in a trusted adult. Offer to go with the friend for professional help.
- Find out what laws in your state may protect your friend from the abuser.
- Never put yourself in a dangerous situation with the victim's partner. Don't try to mediate or otherwise get involved directly.
- Call the police if you witness an assault. Tell an adult — school principal, parent, guidance counselor, or school resource officer — if you suspect the abuse but don't witness it.

Take Action

- Educate teens and adults in your community. Start a peer education program on teen dating violence.
- Encourage your school or a community organization to start a program to help abusers conquer their behavior. Teaching them how to be in a relationship without resorting to violence will help break the cycle.
- Read up on healthy relationships and dating violence. Ask your school library to purchase books about living without violence and the cycle of domestic violence.
- Inquire about having health, social studies, contemporary living, and other classes incorporate discussions of teen dating violence and its prevention.