

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE TRAINING WORKSHOP PART 1



.....  
Supporting the prevention of relationship violence.  
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## **DEFINITION: TEEN DATING VIOLENCE**

Dating violence, like domestic violence, is a pattern of controlling, aggressive, and abusive behaviors of one person over another within a romantic relationship. It can include verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse. It can occur in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships. It knows no boundaries and crosses all lines of race, socio-economic status, etc. It CAN happen to ANYONE.

## **TEEN DATING VIOLENCE STATISTICS**

- \*Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence.**
- \*Teen girls face relationship violence 3 times more than adult women.**
- \*1 in 5 high school girls is physically or sexually hurt by a dating partner.**
- \*1 in 3 teens experience some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships.**
- \*1 in 3 teens reports knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, or physically hurt by a partner.**
- \*45% of teen girls know someone who has been pressured or forced into having intercourse or oral sex.**
- \*Nearly 1.5 million high school students report physical dating violence each year.**
- \*Only 33 % of teens who have been in or known about an abusive dating relationship report having told anyone about it.**
- \*25% of victims say they have been isolated from family and friends.**
- \*More than half of victims say they have compromised their own beliefs to please a partner.**
- \*A third of teens worry about their physical safety.**
- \*Many teens think this is normal.**
- \*Teens report dating abuse via cell phones is a serious problem.**
- \* Cell phone calls and texting mean constant control: 1 in 3 teens say they are text messaged 10, 20, 30 times an hour by a partner keeping tabs on them.**
- \*82% of parents whose teens were emailed or text messaged 30 times an hour were not aware of this.**
- \*The majority of parents of teen victims are unaware of the abuse.**

Statistics from the US Dept. of Justice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Liz Claiborne Inc. teen dating violence survey

## **TYPES OF VIOLENCE**

- Verbal –** name-calling, using put-downs, accusing, blaming, lying, yelling, accuses you of cheating, threatens to harm or kill you, threatens to commit suicide, says they are the only one that loves you, puts down your friends and family, tells you what to wear, tells you everything is your fault, tells you no one else will ever be interested in you
- Emotional -** shows jealousy, embarrassing or humiliating you, controlling behavior, keeping tabs on you through frequent phone calls, e-mails, Instant Messaging, breaks your possessions, smashes things, destroys property, causes isolation by keeping you from spending time with others, tries to keep you from working or controls where you work, stalking
- Physical-** hitting, slapping, biting, squeezing, punching, kicking, choking, pushing, shoving, shaking, twisting your arm, grabbing, pulling hair, spitting, burning, trapping you, hiding your car keys or money or sabotaging your car to keep you from leaving
- Sexual-** forcing you to have sex against your will, rape, unwanted rough or violent sex, not letting someone use birth control (they intentionally try to get you pregnant so you are tied to them for years)
- Financial-** if the victim has a charge card, the abuser may tell the victim to put their name on it and they will run up high bills making the victim responsible for payment, making the victim pay for other things as well

# WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

## **CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR:**

One partner completely rules the relationship and makes the decisions. This includes “checking up” on the victim, timing a victim when they leave the house, checking the odometer on the car, questioning the victim about where they go. The abuser may check the victim’s cell phone for call history and they may check the victim’s e-mail account and website history on their computer. The abuser may control the finances and tries to tell the victim how to dress, who to talk to, and where to go.

## **EXTREME JEALOUSY:**

Jealousy is a sign of insecurity and lack of trust, but the abuser will say that it is a sign of love. The abuser will question the victim about who they talk to, accuse them of flirting, or be jealous of time spent with their friends, family, or children. The abuser may refuse to let the victim work or go to school for fear of meeting someone else. The abuser may call the victim frequently or drop by unexpectedly. The abuser may accuse the victim of flirting with someone else or having an affair.

## **QUICK INVOLVEMENT:**

The abuser comes on strong at the beginning of the relationship, pressuring for a commitment and claims “Love at first sight” or “You’re the only person I could ever talk to”, or “I never met anyone like you before”. Often, in the beginning of a relationship, the abuser is very charming and romantic and the love is intense.

## **UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:**

Abusers expect partners to meet all their needs and be “perfect”. They may say things like “If you love me, then I’m all you need”.

## **ISOLATION:**

The abuser tries to keep the victim from friends and family by putting down everyone the victim knows, including their family and friends. They may keep the victim from going to work or school.

## **BLAMES OTHERS FOR THEIR PROBLEMS AND FEELINGS:**

The abuser does not take responsibility for their problems, blaming others (usually the victim) for almost everything (“you made me mad”).

## **HYPERSENSITIVITY:**

An abuser is easily insulted and takes everything as a personal attack and blows things out of proportion.

## **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN:**

The abuser may punish animals brutally or be insensitive to their pain. They may have unfair expectations of children or tease them until they cry.

## **“PLAYFUL” USE OF FORCE IN SEX:**

The abuser may throw or hold their partner down during sex, may pressure their partner into having sex, may demand sex when their partner is tired or ill or doesn’t want to have sex. They may ask the victim to do things they do not want to do.

## **VERBAL ABUSE:**

The abuser says cruel and harmful things to their victim, degrades them, curses at them, calls them names, or puts down their accomplishments. The abuser tells their victims they are stupid, and unable to function without them. They embarrass and put down the victim in front of others as well.

## **RIGID SEX ROLES:**

The abuser believes in rigid gender roles and sees women as inferior to men and unable to have their own identity. They may see men as the “master of his castle”.

## **DR. JECKYL AND MR. HYDE:**

The abuser experiences severe mood swings and the victim may think the abuser has a mental health problem. One minute they can be charming and sweet and the next minute they become angry and explosive. Explosiveness and moodiness are typical of people who beat their partners.

## **PAST BATTERING:**

The abuser has a history of past battering of partners and although they may admit to that, they say their previous partner provoked them to do it. A batterer will beat any partner they are with if the person is with them long enough for the violence to begin; situational circumstances do not cause a person to have an abusive relationship.

## **THREATS OF VIOLENCE:**

This includes any threat or physical force meant to control the victim: “I’ll kill you”, “I’ll break your neck”, “If you ever leave, I’ll kill you.”

## **BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS:**

This behavior is used as a punishment (breaking treasured possessions), but is mostly used to terrorize the victim into submission. The abuser may break or strike objects near the victim to frighten them.

## **ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT:**

The abuser may kick, pinch, hit, punch, choke, hold the victim down, restrain them from leaving the room, push, shove, or hold them against a wall.

Adapted from “Project for Victims of Family Violence”, Fayetteville, Arkansas and the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County materials.

## HONEYMOON STAGE

Relationship starts out with Romance, flowers, lots of compliments and attention says “I love you” early on, comes on strong, quick involvement; after abuse apologizes, makes excuses and all of the above

## ACUTE BATTERING STAGE

Worst abuse, verbal, physical, sexual violence, leaving victim wounded physically and psychologically

# CYCLE OF ABUSE

## TENSION BUILDING STAGE

Tension builds, arguments, emotional and psychological abuse, criticism, name-calling, yells at victim for no reason, victim feels they can't do anything right, threats, intimidation, may be minor physical abuse; victim fearful

\*Adapted from Lenore Walker's cycle of violence

### CYCLE OF ABUSE

At the beginning of the relationship, the **Honeymoon Stage**, the victim is swept off their feet by all the compliments, gifts and attention. The abuser comes on strong and pressures for a commitment. After awhile, the abuse starts slowly and insidiously, unrecognizable to the victim. And if they do recognize that something might not be right, they make excuses for the abuser's behavior, and abuser is quick to apologize and offer believable explanations. As time goes on, the abuse escalates slowly and continues through the **Tension Building Stage** and then the **Acute Battering Stage**. This is followed by the **Honeymoon Stage** wherein the abuser apologizes, offers gifts, attention, etc. and once again, the victim, who wants to believe the abuser is capable of change, and/or that they can change him, continues in the relationship. This then becomes a self-perpetuating, vicious, and dangerous cycle. Over time, the honeymoon phase gets shorter or disappears and explosions become more violent and dangerous.

As time goes on, the abuser is isolating the victim from family and friends by convincing them friends and family no longer care about them or can be trusted. At the same time, the abuser is humiliating the victim, leading them to believe they are worthless, they are not a good person, no one else will ever be interested in them, and that everything is their fault. As the abuse and resulting psychological damage to the victim continues, the victim is “walking on eggshells” or trying everything in their power to maintain the status quo. Upsetting the status quo means that they probably will incur more abuse. They learn to change their behavior to avoid the abuser's wrath.

There is a magnetism, a controlling force, brainwashing, fear, and many other factors, such as shame, embarrassment, lack of money, and lack of support that keep the victim from attempting to leave the abusive situation, or free themselves from this cycle. Sometimes, what is known (the abuse), is easier to deal with than the unknown (leaving), because at some level the victim knows that their life might be in even greater danger should they leave. In fact, the number one reason why victims tend not to leave abusive relationships is that they fear for their lives.

**This cycle becomes a powerful force destroying the victim psychologically, making it even more difficult for them to escape the cycle. In fact, victims leave and return to a relationship an average of seven times, before leaving for good. And many victims never leave, remaining in the relationship and enduring years of abuse.**

## EFFECTS OF DATING/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE VICTIM

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Loss of appetite, eating disorders      | Mistrust of self and others                |
| Weight loss, Gastrointestinal disorders | Feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem |
| Headaches, Nervous, Anxious             | Sadness, Depression                        |
| Bruises, broken bones                   | Suicidal                                   |
| Central nervous system disorders        | Fear                                       |
| Self-blame, Guilt, Shame                | Terror                                     |
| Confusion                               | Death                                      |

## POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Flashbacks  
Nightmares  
Anxiety  
Emotional numbing  
Insomnia  
Hypervigilance  
Avoidance of traumatic triggers and talking about the problem  
Feeling detached and estranged  
Explosive or inhibited anger  
Helplessness  
Sense of being different from others  
Attribute total power to perpetrator or become preoccupied with relationship to them, including preoccupation with revenge  
Isolation, distrust, or repeated search for a rescuer  
Sense of hopelessness and despair  
Substance abuse  
Self-mutilation, self-harm

## BATTERED WOMEN'S SYNDROME

1. **Believe violence is their fault.**
2. **Inability to place responsibility for violence elsewhere.**
3. **Fears for her life and/or children's lives.**
4. **Irrational belief that abuser is omnipresent and omniscient.**

Adapted from: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, National Center for PTSD

The psychological effects on the victim are devastating. They are truly brainwashed through mind control and manipulation. They are made to believe that everything is their fault; they feel worthless; they believe they are not a good person; and they feel no one else will ever be interested in them. They have difficulty knowing who to trust due to the isolation created by the abuser. The abuser continually puts down the victim's family and friends and tells the victim that their family and friends do not care about the victim. The abuser tells them that they are the only one who really cares about them. Gradually the victim becomes very angry, usually not recognizing the abuse as the source of their anger and they displace that anger on their family and friends. They become extremely confused and do not know who to trust. Together with the fear instilled in them by the abuser (by breaking their possessions, battering them, threatening them, calling them the worst names) they become psychologically destroyed.

## BARRIERS TO LEAVING

1. **Love** – part of them still loves the abuser, they see the “good” in the abuser, they don't want the abuser to suffer more
2. **Hope:** the victim may believe the abuser will change or that they can change them
3. **Fear:** the number one reason why victims don't leave is they fear for their lives
4. **Embarrassment, humiliation, shame**
5. **Lack of support: financial, emotional**
6. **Lack of self-esteem and confidence, abuser brainwashes them into believing they are worthless, everything is their fault, they cannot make it on their own, and no one will ever be interested in them**
7. **Lack of knowledge: about healthy/unhealthy relationships**
8. **Lack of knowledge: about community resources**

## HOW CAN I HELP?

### DO

- Do: Assure confidentiality**, let the victim know if you must report
- Do: Be understanding, non-blaming, honest, and supportive**
- Do: Listen and validate feelings**
- Do: Acknowledge the abuse, show concern**
- Do: Ask questions**, help victim to identify abusive behaviors
- Do: Remind them of their strengths, compliment them, tell them it is not their fault**
- Do: Assess for danger**
- Do: Express concern**
- Do: Offer help, refer to school social worker, guidance, administrator**
- Do: Share information about dynamics of abusive relationships**
- Do: Support their decisions, be patient, and stand by them for as long as it takes**
- Do: Provide information: RICADV, Nat'l Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, Safety Plans, legal information**
- Do: Remember that the most dangerous time for a victim is right after they leave the relationship. The victim needs to have and follow a safety plan.**

### DON'T

- Don't: Pressure**
- Don't: Judge or Blame**
- Don't: Assume victim wants to leave relationship**
- Don't: Place conditions on your support**
- Don't: Put down the abuser**
- Don't: Talk to victim & abuser together**

## SAFETY PLANNING FOR TEENS

Think ahead about ways to be safe if you are in a dangerous or potentially dangerous relationship. And you must remember that you are in the greatest danger AFTER breaking up with your boyfriend. Here are some things to consider in designing your own safety plan.

- What adults can you tell about the violence and abuse?
- With your parents, consider going to the police and getting a restraining order. Notify your school and workplace about this and your situation so they can help to keep you safe. Know that a restraining order alone cannot protect you at all times. Your safety plan can help.
- What people at school can you tell in order to be safe—teachers, principal, counselors, police resource officers?
- Consider changing your school locker or lock. (sometimes you may need to change schools as well)
- 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? Try not to be alone. Go out with friends or in groups.
- Have a “code word” and share it only with your friends, family, and school personnel. When you use it with them they will know to call for help.
- Do not meet the abuser alone, no matter how “nice” or apologetic they sound. Do not believe them even if they threaten suicide. You can never be “just friends”...that is a ploy to get you back. Anything they say to you is all said to get you back. Do NOT believe any of it.
- Keep a journal describing the abuse in detail. Write down dates, witnesses, the type of abuse and what was said or done to you or your property. Take photos of your injuries and damage done to your property. Tape record any phone calls from the abuser. Print out email messages File police reports and see a doctor for injuries and be truthful with them. They will document the injuries. Keep all police and medical records and your journal in a safe place.
- Get rid of or change the number to your beepers, pagers or cell phones and to those the abuser gave you. Change your email address and do not tell the abuser. Consider moving.
- 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. Call 911 in an emergency.
- Where could you go quickly to get away from an abusive person?
- Don't drink alcohol or use other drugs. Remember they will decrease your ability to make healthy decisions

Adapted from [www.acadv.org](http://www.acadv.org) and [www.azcadv.org](http://www.azcadv.org) and [labmf.org](http://labmf.org)

## **STEPS THAT SCHOOLS CAN TAKE**

1. Be sure your school district is following the Lindsay Ann Burke Act:
  - a. Teach about healthy vs. unhealthy relationships (dating violence) in health classes each year from grades 7 thru 12
  - b. Provide dating violence training to all administrators, teachers, nurses, and mental health staff at middle and high schools
  - c. Develop a district policy to address episodes of teen dating violence at school and include this in the student handbook.
  - d. Hold TDV awareness trainings for middle and high school parents
2. Teach about TDV across the curriculum.
3. Make it clear that it is acceptable to talk about dating violence at school.
4. Raise awareness about teen dating violence in your school
  - a. poster contests
  - b. fundraising for domestic violence organizations
  - c. Silent Witness assemblies, plays, events as part of community service

## **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

**National DV Hotline** 1-800-799-SAFE

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org)

**National Teen Dating Violence Helpline** [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) 1-866-331-9474

**Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence and SOAR (Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships)**

24 hour helpline 1-800-494-8100 [www.ricadv.org](http://www.ricadv.org) [www.soarinri.org](http://www.soarinri.org)

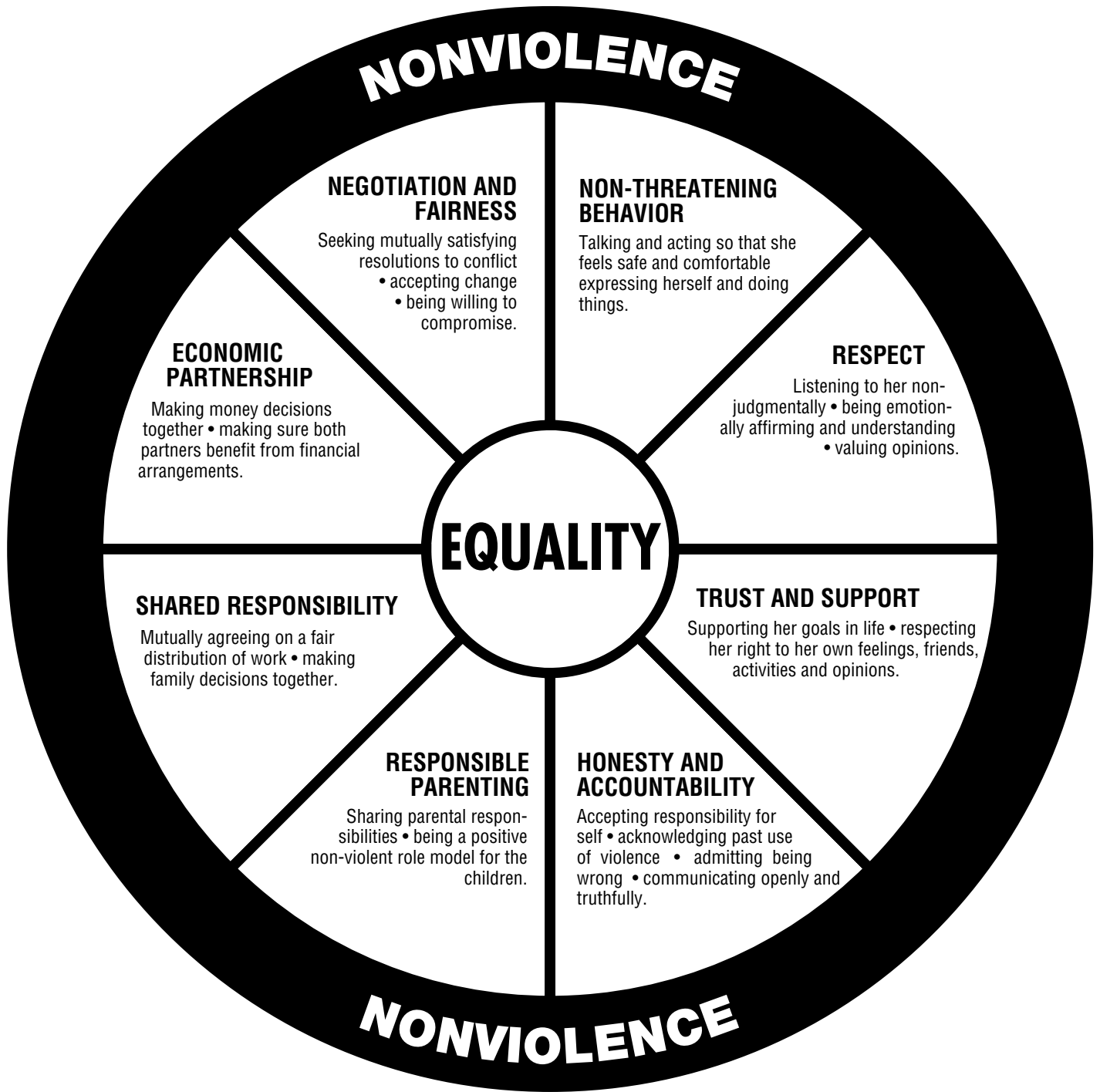
## TEEN DATING VIOLENCE WEBSITES FOR PARENTS/TEENS

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| <a href="http://www.loveisrespect.org">www.loveisrespect.org</a>  | Nat'l Teen Dating Violence Abuse Helpline, get help from teens, find facts, watch the video and PSA's, sign Dating Bill of Rights and more, Excellent site |
| <a href="http://www.ndvh.org">www.ndvh.org</a>  | National Domestic Violence Hotline, links for each state's Coalition Against Domestic Violence   |
| <a href="http://www.loveisnotabuse.com">www.loveisnotabuse.com</a>  | Liz Claiborne, Inc. great site, handbooks, brochures for parents/teens   |
| <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/chooserespect">www.cdc.gov/chooserespect</a>  | Info for students with links to other excellent sites, teen video can be used for class, parent video for presentations.                                   |
| <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/features/cdctv/">http://www.cdc.gov/features/cdctv/</a>                                       | Break the Silence video on dating violence for parents   |
| <a href="http://www.seeitandstopit.org">www.seeitandstopit.org</a>  | good site for teens  |
| <a href="http://www.labmf.org">www.labmf.org</a>  | Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, resource for teachers/parents/teens   |
| <a href="http://www.thatsnotcool.com">www.thatsnotcool.com</a>  | Great site on digital/electronic harassment/abuse  |
| <a href="http://www.netsmartz.org">www.netsmartz.org</a>  | Digital abuse info   |
| <a href="http://www.giverespect.org">www.giverespect.org</a>  | Good info from Family Violence Prevention Fund with a link to next site  |
| <a href="http://www.lessonsfromliterature.org">www.lessonsfromliterature.org</a>  | Contains lesson plans for English Lit teachers & uses "Their Eyes are Watching God" and "Lord of the Flies" to teach abusive relationships                 |
| <a href="http://www.kbep.org">www.kbep.org</a>  | Tips for parents, Quiz for teens   |
| <a href="http://www.ricadv.org">www.ricadv.org</a>  | Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence   |
| <a href="http://www.satrc.org">www.satrc.org</a>  | Day One Sexual Assault & Trauma Resource Ctr of RI, help for victims   |
| <a href="http://www.teensagainstabuse.org">www.teensagainstabuse.org</a>  | Teen group, good site  |
| <a href="http://www.acadv.org">www.acadv.org</a>  | Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence  |
| <a href="http://www.safeyouth.org">www.safeyouth.org</a>  | National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center   |
| <a href="http://www.teenrelationships.org/abuse/abuse.htm">www.teenrelationships.org/abuse/abuse.htm</a>                  | Good teen site   |
| <a href="http://www.breakthecycle.org">www.breakthecycle.org</a>  | Good site for teens, parents, click on "Get Info", "Get Help"  |
| <a href="http://www.endabuse.org">www.endabuse.org</a>  | Family Violence Prevention Fund, click on teens  |
| <a href="http://www.opdv.state.ny.us">www.opdv.state.ny.us</a>  | Good information for parents & teens, click on "Teens"   |
| <a href="http://www.ncvc.org">www.ncvc.org</a>  | National Center for Victims of Crime, click on "Dating Violence Resource Center", good info for parents and teens; info on teen restraining orders         |
| <a href="http://www.ncadv.org/resources/StateCoalitionList.php">http://www.ncadv.org/resources/StateCoalitionList.php</a> | List of State Coalitions Against Domestic Violence   |
| <a href="http://www.massmed.org">www.massmed.org</a>  | Mass. Medical Society, SEARCH "dating violence: parent handouts  |
| <a href="http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/">www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/</a>  | When Love Hurts, a guide for love, respect, abusive relationships, great for teens/ parents  |
| <a href="http://www.joetorre.net">www.joetorre.net</a>  | Basic facts for adults and children, Joe's Story   |
| <a href="http://www.kidpower.org">www.kidpower.org</a>  | Click on Resources, Personal Safety  |
| <a href="http://www.atg.wa.gov">www.atg.wa.gov</a>  | Washington State Attorney General, click on Protecting Youth   |

### BOOKS:

**What Parents Need to Know About Dating Violence** by Barrie Levy a must-read for all parents, especially if you have a teen in an abusive relationship

**Saving Beauty From the Beast** by Vicki Crompton - resource if you have a teen in an abusive relationship



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street  
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2781



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202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

218-722-2781

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ H.R. \_\_\_\_\_  
ADMINISTRATIVE Staff \_\_\_\_\_

**VICTIM SAFETY PLAN**

**A safety plan should be considered when a student discloses dating violence and abuse, whether or not a Restraining Order/No Contact Order has been issued by the court.**

NOTE: Administrative staff should develop this plan with the victim, in an effort to empower the victim and keep him/her safe. A safety plan needs to be individualized, as every victim has unique needs and challenges.

**1.) Any Schedule Changes Made** (attach revised schedule) School should consider who will notify the teachers, what if there's only one AP English course in the school and both parties take the course?

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**2) School Arrival** (change in time, entrance, transportation, with whom, etc...)

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**3) Locker** (Is there a gym locker as well? How will the student access their locker ex. five minutes early?)

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**4) Lunch** (Is the cafeteria safe? Can the victim experience retaliation from friends of the perpetrator? Can the eating schedule be changed? Who will alert cafeteria staff of the order?)

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**5) Route Changes** (include places to avoid/watch for, after school activities and team schedules, travel to and from school, class, etc.)

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**6. School Departure** (*time, entrance, designated friend, etc.*)

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**7. STAFF:** *Let the victim select one staff member that they feel comfortable with.. This staff person should be available for student for "check-ins" and support as needed.*

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**Support Staff** \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Additional Staff to Share Plan With:** (Administrators, Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Resource Officer, Lunch Aides, Bus Driver, Coaches, School Nurse, etc.)

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**9. Support Network of Peers:** (to accompany student throughout the day if necessary)

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**10. Strategies to Problem Solve:** Have the victim think through different ways s/he will react and deal with emergency situations, where they would go? Who would they call? Consider strategies to assess dangerousness, threats, etc.

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**11. Any Additional Special Conditions:** Are there other extracurricular school activities/events which present conflicts? How are they to be addressed?

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**12. School has completed the Restraining Order/ No Contact Order School Checklist.**

Developed by the office of the Essex County District Attorney Kevin Burke

*Taken from "A Guide To Preventing Bullying, Teen Dating Violence, and Sexual Violence in Rhode Island Schools" developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education, in accordance with the Lindsay Ann Burke Act of 2007. Found at [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)*

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE WITH YOUR STUDENTS: A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

*Teen dating violence is a silent epidemic. In one study, the majority of teen dating violence victims told no one about their victimization—fewer than 22% told a peer, and only 5% told an adult. The reasons that teens are reluctant to reach out to adults vary considerably. They may fear no one will believe them or that they will be blamed for the abuse. Many fear retaliation from the perpetrator. The cycle of abuse fuels these feelings of shame and vulnerability and further isolates victims from support and services.*

Educators can work to end this harmful cycle by reaching out to students who may be struggling in an abusive relationship. When educators respond to incidents of dating violence they convey to students that school is a safe place where violence is not tolerated and human dignity is valued.

Dating violence, like any form of family violence, is complex. Starting a conversation will not “end” or “fix” the problem for the student. But, a talk with you could empower him or her to speak openly about the problem and seek the help they need.

Talking to teens about dating violence is a skill that any educator can master. What follows is a 5 step process to help you speak effectively with students about dating violence: How to approach a student who may be at risk, directly state your concern, and respond to what they tell you.

Read each step carefully and picture yourself doing and saying each procedure. You may want to team up with a colleague or a friend to help you role play around different scenarios. As you practice, these procedures will become more familiar and you will be more effective.

**STEP 1:** Set the Stage—Put the student at ease by creating a safe environment.

A safe space can go a long way towards making a student feel comfortable to talk about an abusive relationship. Confidentiality and kindness are the cornerstones of a safe environment.

1. **Convey Confidentiality**—This is a sensitive conversation that should take place between you and the student. It is neither necessary nor desirable for other students to present—even best friends and *especially* the alleged perpetrator—as this could compromise victim privacy and safety.

2. **Kindness**—Invite honest conversation using a friendly, calm tone when you speak. Smile, offer the student a seat.

**STEP 2:** Inquire—Direct, kind language conveys compassion and gravity.

Speak directly and warmly. Let the student know that you take both his wellness and the issue of dating violence seriously. Doing this conveys the trust that will be necessary to foster an honest, constructive dialogue. An effective inquiry is kind, direct, brief, and has 3 parts:

1. **A specific and succinct description of what you saw.** Note time and place: “*David, yesterday when you were leaving class I noticed that Leticia grabbed you by the arm.*”

**2. A connection of that act and the definition of abuse:** *“When one person in a relationship hurts their partner or tries to make them feel afraid, it’s called abuse, and it’s never ok.”*

**3. A statement of your concern followed by an invitation for further discussion:** *I’m concerned for your safety. Would you like to talk about it?”*

**STEP 3:** Listen.

*The fear that no one will listen keeps many teen victims of violence from reaching out to adults. So, at this point, active listening is absolutely critical to achieving your goal. Active listening comprises the following:*

- a. **Eye contact**—Nothing says undivided attention like consistent eye contact.
- b. **Silence**—Allow the student to speak, do not interrupt. If you wish to convey understanding or sympathy do so with non-verbal cues (such as slight nod of the head or a smile).

**STEP 4:** Respond—Validate and Convey Empathy

Once the student has finished speaking, it is important that you validate what they say and convey your empathy. This must happen whether or not the student discloses abuse.

**If the student does not disclose:**

*“Thank you. Your safety is important to me. If you feel unsafe, I’m here for you.”*

Resist the urge to push or pry, if there is abuse, the student must choose when and how to talk about it. Your job is to validate, convey empathy, and keep the door open.

**If the student does disclose:**

**Validate:** Let the student know you believe them (even if you don’t). *“I believe you.”*

**Convey empathy:** Let the student know you care about them  
*“The abuse you have suffered is not your fault” “You are not alone”*

**STEP 5: Refer—Direct the student towards school and community resources**

Utilize your list of statewide resources for victims of dating violence and abuse. Know your school’s policy for reporting dating violence. Let them know that there is help available if they decide they want it.

*Taken from "A Guide To Preventing Bullying, Teen Dating Violence, and Sexual Violence in Rhode Island Schools" developed by the Rhode Island Department of Education, in accordance with the Lindsay Ann Burke Act of 2007. Found at [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)*

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

## What Is Teen Dating Violence?

Dating violence or relationship violence is a pattern of violence 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 take many forms, including threats, emotional abuse, insults, isolation from friends and family, name calling and controlling what someone wears or with whom they socialize. It can also include sexual abuse. It can happen to anyone, at any age, no matter what his or her race, religion, level of education or economic background.

## How Can I Tell If My Teen Is A Victim Of Teen Dating Violence?

- Is your teen withdrawing from school or family activities?
- Has your teen become secretive, ashamed, hostile, or isolated from their friends and family?
- Is your teen spending all their time with their partner or does that partner maintain constant contact with calls, texts, or instant messages?
- Does your teen have unexplained injuries or apologize for his or her partner's behavior?
- Do you suspect alcohol or drug use?
- The use of alcohol and drugs could be a response to pressure from their partner. It may also be an attempt to numb pain or emotions.
- Does your teen believe that they have to be in a relationship to be happy or think that jealousy and possessiveness are signs of love?

## How Can I Tell If My Teen Is Abusive?

- Is my teen excessively jealous and possessive?
- Does my teen have an explosive temper?
- Is my teen constantly ridiculing, criticizing or insulting their partner?
- Does my teen blame others when he/she gets angry or things don't go their way?
- Does your teen exhibit abusive behaviors towards you, friends, or other family members?
- Does your teen use guilt trips – "If you really loved me you would..."

## Why Teens Don't Tell Parents About Dating

- Afraid that their parents will make them break up
- Embarrassed, ashamed, or confused
- Afraid of losing privileges
- May have little or no experience with relationships
- Believe being involved with someone is more important than not having a boy/girlfriend
- Confuse jealousy with love
- Do not think anyone will believe that violence is happening to them
- Have lost touch with friends and is afraid to be alone
- Knows the abuser acts nice, Sometimes
- Afraid the abuse will get worse
- Isolation from and mistrust of family and friends due to abusive relationship
- Fear

## Parents Can Help End Teen Dating Violence

Parents play a very important role in ending dating abuse. Teens in abusive situations truly need the support of their parents. Even in the rockiest of parent-teen relationship, the advice a parent can give can make a dramatic difference in a teen's life.

### *Assess your own relationship values before you talk to your kids.*

How do you expect men and women to act in a dating relationship? How should people behave when they disagree? How should decisions be made in a relationship? Make sure you can explain your reasoning and can support it with ex.

### *Teach Problem Solving*

When confronted with a difficult situation, have your child determine what exactly happened and ask them to think of several different ways the situation could be resolved. Have them consider the consequences of each solution and discussing their choices with them.

**Reveal the Unspoken “Rules of Dating”**

Give your kids clear examples of what is appropriate behavior in a dating relationship. Talk to them about the standard of conduct that you expect rather than letting your kids get information from their friends.

**Tell the Whole truth...Good and Bad**

Teens generally view dating very romantically. Support these expectations but also be Realistic with them about bad things that can happen. Let them know that violence is never acceptable. Give them a few suggestions or phrases to help them out of a difficult situation (“I’m not ready to go that far” or “I am not comfortable”).

**Teach Assertiveness, Not Aggressiveness**

One of the best skills parents can teach their teens are to make their feelings known by stating their opinions, desires, and reactions clearly. If they don’t want to do something, they need to say so, or if conflict is escalating, take a break from the situation.

**Teach Anger Control**

Help your kids recognize their personal warning signs for danger. Do they have clenched fists, red face, are tense? Teach them to calm themselves down, breathing, counting, or walking away.

**Teach Negotiation**

Help your child understand that compromise and taking turns are positive steps to a healthy relationship and that violence, threats and insults have no place in respectful negotiation. Stating each person’s point of view honestly and discussing options for both people to get what they need.

**Explain the Danger Zone**

Teach your children to recognize that thoughts of aggression are signals of frustration that need to be dealt with. Help your kids understand that any incident of violence in a relationship is a predictor of a very serious problem that will continue to get worse.

**Keep No Secrets**

Secrecy that isolates kids from friends and family is not acceptable and can be the first sign of manipulation and coercion. Teach your kids that being strong means relying on parents, teachers, and police, if necessary.

**Be the Ultimate Role Model**

Teens learn by watching, especially parents. It is critical that you respect yourself, your partner and other people.

**Educate yourself about abusive relationships**

Learn the facts and Talk to your teen about healthy vs. abusive relationships, reinforcing what your teen is learning in health class. Parents and schools are partners in educating our youth.

**If Your Teen Tells You About Dating Violence**

- Listen without judging. Believe them.
- Recognize your own feelings, using “I” statements when describing your feelings about their safety
- Be sure to use specific examples in their relationship
- Realize your limitations in providing support, and contact a professional.
- Discuss options: counseling, reporting, medical needs
- Let your teen be in control and support their decisions
- Take young relationships seriously, your teen does

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**Chapter 490**  
**2007 -- S 0875 SUBSTITUTE B**  
**Enacted 07/03/07**

**A N A C T**  
**RELATING TO EDUCATION - DATING VIOLENCE "LINDSAY ANN BURKE ACT"**

**Introduced By:** Senators Lanzi, Paiva-Weed, Perry, Gallo, and Goodwin

**Date Introduced:** March 20, 2007

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Title 16 of the General Laws entitled "EDUCATION" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

**CHAPTER 85**

**LINDSAY ANN BURKE ACT**

**16-85-1. Short title.** – This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Lindsay Ann Burke Act."

**16-85-2. Legislative findings.** – The general assembly hereby finds, determines and declares that when a student is a victim of dating violence, his or her academic life suffers and his or her safety at school is jeopardized. The general assembly therefore finds that a policy to create an environment free of dating violence shall be a part of each school district. It is the intent of the general assembly to enact legislation that would require each school district to establish a policy for responding to incidents of dating violence and to provide dating violence education to students, parents, staff, faculty and administrators, in order to prevent dating violence and to address incidents involving dating violence. All students have a right to work and study in a safe, supportive environment that is free from harassment, intimidation and violence.

SECTION 2. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

**16-21-30. Dating violence policy.** – (a) As used in this section:

(1) "Dating violence" means a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.

(2) "Dating partner" means any person, regardless of gender, involved in an intimate relationship with another primarily characterized by the expectation of affectionate involvement whether casual, serious or long-term.

(3) "At school" means in a classroom, on or immediately adjacent to school premises, on a school bus or other school-related vehicle, at an official school bus stop, or at any school-sponsored activity or event whether or not it is on school grounds.

(b) The department of education shall develop a model dating violence policy to assist school districts in developing policies for dating violence reporting and response. The model policy shall be issued on or before April 1, 2008.

(c) Each school district shall establish a specific policy to address incidents of dating violence involving students at school by December 1, 2008. Each school district shall verify compliance with the department of education on an annual basis through the annual school health report.

(1) Such policy shall include, but not be limited to, a statement that dating violence will not be tolerated,

dating violence reporting procedures, guidelines to responding to at school incidents of dating violence and discipline procedures specific to such incidents.

(2) To ensure notice of the school district's dating violence policy, the policy shall be published in any school district policy and handbook that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures and standards of conduct for students at school.

(d) Each school district shall provide dating violence training to all administrators, teachers, nurses and mental health staff at the middle and high school levels. Upon the recommendation of the administrator, other staff may be included or may attend the training on a volunteer basis. The dating violence training shall include, but not be limited to, basic principles of dating violence, warnings signs of dating violence and the school district's dating violence policy, to ensure that they are able to appropriately respond to incidents of dating violence at school. Thereafter, this training shall be provided yearly to all newly hired staff deemed appropriate to receive the training by the school's administration.

(e) Each school district shall inform the students' parents or legal guardians of the school district's dating violence policy. If requested, the school district shall provide the parents or legal guardians with the school district's dating violence policy and relevant information. It is strongly recommended that the school district provide parent awareness training.

(f) This section does not prevent a victim from seeking redress under any other available law, either civil or criminal. This section does not create or alter any tort liability.

SECTION 3. Chapter 16-22 of the General Laws entitled "Curriculum" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

**16-22-24. Dating violence education.** – (a) Each school district shall incorporate dating violence education that is age-appropriate into the annual health curriculum framework for students in grades seven (7) through twelve (12).

(1) Dating violence education shall include, but not be limited to, defining dating violence, recognizing dating violence warning signs and characteristics of healthy relationships. Additionally, students shall be provided with the school district's dating violence policy as provided in subsection 16-21-30(c).

(2) For the purposes of this section:

(i) "Dating violence" means a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.

(ii) "Dating partner" means any person involved in an intimate association with another primarily characterized by the expectation of affectionate involvement whether casual, serious or long-term.

(iii) "At school" means in a classroom, on or immediately adjacent to such school premises, on a school bus or other school-related vehicle, at an official school bus stop, or at any school sponsored activity or event whether or not it is on school grounds.

(3) To assist school districts in developing a dating violence education program, the department of education shall review and approve the grade level topics relating to dating violence and healthy relationships in the "health literacy for all students: the Rhode Island health education framework."

(4) The provisions of this section shall be amended in the health education curriculum sections of the Rhode Island rules and regulations for school health programs, R16-21-SCHO, and the Rhode Island basic education program at their next revisions.

(b) Upon written request to the school principal, a parent or legal guardian of a pupil less than eighteen (18) years of age, within a reasonable period of time after the request is made, shall be permitted to examine the dating violence education program instruction materials at the school in which his or her child is enrolled.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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