



Teen Dating and Violence

VIOLENCE IN TEEN DATING IS SO PREVALENT THAT THE U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has deemed it a national epidemic that crosses all socioeconomic and ethnic lines. If you haven't considered the possibility that your teen could become a victim, take a look at these statistics from The ParentTeen Connection, a national newsletter and Web site: One out of every three teen-age women will experience intimate partner violence. One out of 10 high school students experiences physical violence in her dating relationship. Forty percent of girls aged 14 through 17 say they know someone their age who has been hit by a boyfriend.

Parents can help protect their children from dating violence by knowing the facts and watching for warning signs of abuse.

Warning signs of abuse

Parents should know that girls who exhibit these warning signs may be in a dangerous relationship:

- Isolation from friends or family
- Declining grades during the relationship.
- Skipping school or wanting to drop out.
- Bruises or other unexplained injuries
- Emotional outbursts or crying spells.
- Changes in personality, attitude or appearance.
- Becoming secretive.
- Needing to tell her partner where she is at all times, and talk to him immediately if she misses his call.
- Making excuses for his bad behavior.
- Becoming very critical of herself or very indecisive.

The abusive partner may also exhibit some telltale clues:

- He becomes jealous or angry easily.
- He has been physically or emotionally abused.
- He drinks or uses drugs.
- He roughhouses with his girlfriend frequently.

What parents can do

If you think your teen is in an abusive relationship, it can be difficult to help.

- Ask your teen-ager questions about signs of abuse.
- Maintain open lines of communication and provide a safety net for your child.
- Talk with her so she understands what to expect from a healthy relationship and how to recognize abuse.
- Remain supportive.
- Listen to and acknowledge your teen's feelings.
- Focus on her safety rather than on breaking up the relationship.
- Tell people about the abuse. That way your teen will have a group of people watching out for her.
- Call the police if necessary and help your daughter get a criminal restraining order.

Parents also can help keep teens safe by learning about the beliefs that contribute to dating violence and working to change them.

Help is available. If you are concerned about abuse in your relationship, *VZ-LIFE* can help. Contact *VZ-LIFE* 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. All calls are confidential.

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON FAMILY CARE

877-ACFC-HELPS | 877-223-2435

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