



Teen Dating Violence Factsheet

Teen dating violence is abuse between current or former intimate partners that can involve physical, emotional or sexual abuse or stalking. It is widespread, serious and can be just as dangerous as adult intimate partner abuse. Far too many teens are experiencing it, but many never reach out for help. Prevention efforts for teens and pre-teens that raise awareness and promote healthy relationships are essential to fighting the issue of domestic violence and ending the cycle of abuse.

Epidemic

- Nearly **1.5 million** high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.
- Nearly **1 in 10** high school students report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their partner.
- **1 in 3** teen girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.
- Women between **16 and 24** experience a rate of intimate partner violence, almost triple the national average.
- Teens in same-sex relationships experience rates of abuse similar to rates experienced by teens in heterosexual relationships.

Impact

- Half of youth who have been victims of both dating violence and rape attempt suicide, compared to **12.5%** of non-abused girls and **5.4%** of non-abused boys.
- Physical and sexual dating violence against adolescent girls is associated with increased risk of drug or alcohol use, eating disorders, sexual risk behaviors, pregnancy and attempts to commit or consider suicide.
- Having been a victim of physical dating violence is associated with lower than average grades and poor school attachment for male and female students in grades 7 through 12.



Hidden

Only **33%** of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse.

63% of parents whose children have been in a dating relationship say dating violence has not been a problem for their teens, but the data shows otherwise.

Technology & Abuse

1 in 4 teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cellphones and texting.

Hope for the Future

Only **25%** of teens have taken a course on relationships and dating at school, but of those who have, **(75%)** say they now feel confident that they would be able to judge whether a relationship is abusive.

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Among 11 to 14 year olds who have been in a relationship: (62%) say they know friends who have been verbally abused (called stupid, worthless, ugly, etc.) by a boyfriend/girlfriend.



Is it abuse?

An unhealthy relationship has an imbalance in which one person tries to gain power and control over the other through threats, emotional/verbal abuse, or physical or sexual violence. It can include:

- Name calling, making a person feel stupid, telling them they can't do anything right.
- Making all the decisions, telling someone what to do, what to wear, who to spend time with.
- Constant text messages or cell phone calls that make the other person feel uncomfortable or disrupt their life.
- Checking someone's cell phone, email or social media accounts without permission or humiliating them through social media.
- Cutting a person off from friends and family. Monopolizing all their time.
- Pressuring or forcing someone into sexual activity or sexting.
- Shoving, grabbing, hitting, pinching, or kicking someone.
- Intimidating them through looks or actions.
- Excessive jealousy and possessiveness.
- Threatening suicide if the relationship ends.
- Threatening to out someone to their friends or family.

"I'm not quite sure when I lost myself in this relationship, but before I knew it, I was in the thick of it."

What does a healthy relationship look like?

Relationships should be built on a foundation of equality and respect and should include qualities like honesty, trust, support, and understanding. Even if someone is just hooking up and not in a serious relationship, people still deserve to be treated with respect. Healthy relationships include:

- Respecting one another's individuality, opinions and choices.
- The ability to share feelings honestly or disagree and feel safe.
- Understanding and supporting the other's desire to spend time alone or with friends or family.

"Love should feel safe, even if you disagree."

If you think you, your teen, or your friend is being abused:

- Confidential advocates are standing by 24/7 to support you or provide information.
- You don't need to be in crisis to call and you can remain anonymous by choosing not to share your name.
- Advocates can provide emotional support and safety planning and share information about legal options like restraining orders.
- The most important messages to give someone who is being abused are: **"I believe you"** & **"You don't deserve to be treated like this"** & **"I will be there to listen and support you"**

If you think you, your teen, or your friend is being abusive:

- Know that there are better and healthier ways to communicate and treat people.
- Violence and abuse are a choices and it's important to take responsibility and get help to end the behavior.
- If you see someone being abusive, let them know that you are concerned and it's not okay.
- Educate yourself about healthy relationships and encourage others to do the same.