

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month: Talking with Your Teen

Though some parents would prefer that their kids not date until age 35, most teens look forward to their first dating experience. So, if you are waiting to teach your kids about dating and healthy relationships, NOW is the time. Healthy relationships involve certain qualities some teens may not yet have developed and parents play a critical role in teaching those skills. Modeling healthy relationship qualities is important.

Teen dating violence involves physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as stalking or harassment. Physical abuse may be easily recognized while the other forms of abuse might go un-noticed. Knowing the forms of abuse can help parents recognize the signs.

Since 1 in 11 females and 1 in 15 males report experiencing abuse during dating relationships, it is important that parents recognize the signs and know how to initiate what could be an uncomfortable conversation.

Teen Dating Violence Occurs Different Ways

1	2	3	4
Physical	Emotional	Sexual	Stalking
Pinching, hitting, shoving, or kicking.	Threatening, name calling, or harming a partner's self-worth.	Forcing a partner in a sex act when he or she does not or cannot consent.	Pattern of unwanted harassing or threatening tactics that cause fear.

Adolescence is ideal for promoting healthy relationships and preventing patterns of dating violence that can last into adulthood.

VetoViolence

Conversations with teens can seem one-sided since they often respond with one-word answers. Below, are tips on communicating with teens and common signs of abuse.

To engage teens, consider the following:

- Talk less and listen more.
- Be mindful of your responses and emotional reactions which could shut down the conversation.
- Be understanding and do not take things personally.
- When appropriate, give them the opportunity to take charge of their issue.
- Respect that they may not understand until later.



Signs your teen may be abused:

- Extremely jealous
- Possessive partner
- Partner makes all of the decisions
- Isolates from family and friends
- Unexplained marks and bruises
- Drastic changes in grades and interests

Ask direct questions:

- What are your friends' dating relationships like?
- Have you ever seen any kind of abusive behavior among your friends who are dating?
- What would you do if someone (physically, emotionally, sexually or hurt you? Attempted to hurt you?
- Has anyone ever hurt you?
- You know you can talk to me, right? What can I do to help?

