

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

HELPLINES:

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Domestic and Sexual Violence Services
of Carbon County 24-hour Helpline:
(406) 425-2222

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline:
1-866-331-9474

National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

ON THE WEB:

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE:

www.dsvsmontana.org
www.loveisnotabuse.com
www.loveisrespect.org
www.seeitandstopit.org
www.thesafespace.org

TECHNOLOGY SAFETY:

www.stopcyberbullying.org
www.getnetwise.org

CARBON COUNTY RESOURCES:

Sheriff: (406) 446-1234
County Attorney: (406) 446-3300
Beartooth Hospital: (406) 446-2345

Project funded by: The O.P. and W.E. Edwards Foundation, The Montana
Community Foundation and The Verizon Wireless Hopeline Grant

critical conversations

HOW TO TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE



Domestic and Sexual Violence Services of Carbon County
P.O. Box 314, 506 North Broadway
Red Lodge, MT 59068
Office: 406-446-2296
24-Hour Helpline: 406-425-2222
info@dsvsmontana.org

Dear friend,

Thank you for taking the time to pick up this handbook. As a concerned adult, you have the potential to make a great difference in the lives of young people. This handbook was designed as a resource to help Carbon County adults begin discussing dating violence with teens. While many teens won't initiate these conversations on their own, many may be grateful to have the opportunity to discuss this issue and your knowledge may make all the difference. Thank you for doing your part to prevent teen dating violence.

-the Staff of DSVS

WHAT IS DATING VIOLENCE?

Dating violence is a pattern of violent, controlling behavior that someone uses against a dating partner. Abuse can cause injury and even death, but it does not 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. Dating violence can happen to anyone, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, level of education, economic background or race.

MYTH: Individuals experiencing dating violence bring the abuse on themselves.

FACT: Nobody likes being abused and nobody deserves to be abused. Perpetrators believe they have the right to abuse and control their partners; they see their partners as less-than-equal.

THE NUMBERS

40% of girls ages 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

Nearly **1 in 5** teenage girls who have been in a dating relationship say a boyfriend has threatened violence or self-harm if she were to break up with him.

1 in 4 teenage girls who have been in dating relationships reveal they have been pressured to perform oral sex or engage in intercourse.

Of the young women between the ages of 15-19 murdered each year, **30%** are killed by their husband or boyfriend.

26% of teenage girls in a relationship report enduring repeated verbal abuse.

Nearly **80%** of girls who have been physically abused in their dating relationships continue to date their abuser.

80% of teens regard verbal abuse as a "serious issue" for their age group.

QUICK HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS QUIZ



Use these questions to start discussion with a teen about relationship expectations and attitudes:

1. Choose a couple who you think has a healthy relationship. Choose a couple who you think has an unhealthy relationship. What characteristics and behaviors caused you to pick each?
2. What qualities are important to you in a dating partner?
3. What are healthy ways to argue? What are unhealthy ways to argue? Think of a time when you may have had an ineffective argument; what could you have done differently to make it a healthier argument?
4. What does it mean to stand up for yourself? What are the differences between being assertive and being aggressive or pushy?
5. What should you do if someone you are dating threatens you or makes you feel uncomfortable? Who would you talk to about this?

MYTH: If a person stays in an abusive relationship, it must not be that bad.

FACT: People stay in abusive relationships for a number of reasons: fear, economic dependence, confusion, loss of self-confidence, not recognizing the behavior as abusive, belief that the abuser needs their help or will change.

SUGGESTED TEEN DATING VIOLENCE READING LIST:

Levy, Barrie, and Patricia Occhiuzzo Giggans. What Parents Need to Know about Dating Violence. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1995.

Murray, Jill. But I Love Him: Protecting Your Teen Daughter from Controlling, Abusive Relationships. New York, NY: Regan Books, 2001.

Gaddis, Patricia Riddle. Dangerous Dating: Helping Young Women Say No to Abusive Relationships. Colorado Springs, CO: Shaw, 2000.

Kivel, Paul. Boys Will Be Men: Raising Our Sons for Courage, Caring and Community. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 1999.

Bancroft, Lundy. Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men. New York, NY: Putnam's Sons, 2002.

TEENS AND TECHNOLOGY

While cell phones, the Internet and other forms of technology are powerful tools that make communication and networking easier, they have also created new avenues for abuse that most adults and teens may not even be aware of.

INTERNET SAFETY

Online networking sites prove a particular threat to young people. Sites such as MySpace and Facebook provide sexual predators with easy access to potential victims and their personal information. Studies reflect that one in seven youth Internet users has received unwanted sexual solicitations online, and that 14% of teens arranged to meet face-to-face with somebody that they had only talked to online. To make sure that teens are being safe online, ask them:

- **Is your profile on MySpace/Facebook set to private?** This means that only your friends are able to view your profile. If not, anybody with access to the Internet is able to view information posted there.
- **Did you provide your personal information when signing up for e-mail, blog, music-sharing, instant messaging or any other online service?** Often times these services will ask for your name, birth date, location and other personal information when you sign up for their services. Unless specified otherwise, these services may post this information to their sites, allowing anybody using that service to access the information.
- **Do you communicate with people that you have only met online?** Explain that this can be extremely dangerous and that people may not be who they represent themselves as online.

TECHNOLOGY ABUSE IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP

Abusers may utilize technology to further exert power and control over a dating partner. Excessive phone calls, text messages and online communications are all warning signs of an abusive relationship, and they happen more than you might think. Studies report that among teens who have been in a dating relationship:

- Nearly one in three (30%) say they've been text messaged 10, 20 or 30 times an hour by a dating partner trying to find out where they are, what they're doing, or who they're with.
- 17% say their dating partner has made them afraid to miss or ignore a cell phone call, e-mail, instant message or text message because of how he/she might react.
- 25% say they have been called names, harassed, or put down by their dating partner through cell phones and text messaging.
- Almost half (45%) did not consider technology abuse "serious at all."

YOUR ROLE

Nearly 90% of teens report having been in a dating relationship. As such, it is important that adults begin talking to children and teens about healthy relationships and dating violence early and often. Research shows that teens are reluctant to tell their parents and other caring adults about abuse either because they fear consequences or because they are unable to interpret various behaviors as abusive. Talking with teens openly and honestly about healthy relationships increases the likelihood that they will approach you about unhealthy relationships.

MYTH: "It can't happen to the teens I know."
FACT: Approximately one in five high school girls reports being physically or sexually abused by a partner. Abuse can happen to boys as well as girls.

TIP #1: It is never too early or too late to teach self-respect. No one has the right to control his/her dating partner, by telling that person who to see, what to do, how to behave, or what to wear. Dating relationships should be based on equality and mutual respect.

TIP #2: Use personal examples, those of friends or on television to talk with teens about healthy relationship behaviors and expectations.

TIP #3: Think about your own behaviors, beliefs and the example that you set for the young people around you.

TIP #4: Don't worry about having all the answers. If a teen asks a question you aren't sure how to answer, work with her/him to find the answer.

TIP #5: Maintain open and comfortable dialogue. Don't criticize opinions that you disagree with. You want to confirm that you are a non-judgmental listener and a good source of information.

TIP #6: Ask your school administrator to implement teen dating violence prevention, intervention and healthy relationships programs.

TIP #7: Anytime a teen in your life wants to talk to you, drop everything and pay attention!

MYTH: "It only happens to kids from bad homes."
FACT: Dating violence happens to young people from all types of homes and in families of all cultures, income levels, educational backgrounds and religious beliefs. Teen dating violence is NOT limited to teens with a history of family violence.

WARNING SIGNS THAT A TEEN YOU CARE ABOUT MAY BE EXPERIENCING DATING VIOLENCE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Some of the following may just be part of being a teenager. However, when these changes happen suddenly or without explanation, there may be cause for concern.

- Sudden changes in clothes or make-up
- Sudden changes in mood or personality, becoming anxious or depressed, acting out, being secretive
- Failing grades or dropping out of school activities
- Pregnancy: some teens believe that having a baby will help make things better; some girls are forced to have sex
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits, avoiding eye contact, having crying fits or becoming hysterical
- Unexplained bruises, scratches or other injuries
- Difficulty making decisions
- Constantly thinking about dating partner
- Using alcohol or drugs
- Avoiding friends

WARNING SIGNS THAT A DATING PARTNER MAY BECOME VIOLENT

- Wants to get serious quickly — will not take “no” for an answer
- Is jealous and possessive — wants to pick the partner’s friends and activities
- Is controlling and bossy — makes all the decisions, does not take others’ opinions seriously, uses put-downs when alone or with friends
- Uses guilt trips — “If you really loved me, you would...”
- Blames the dating partner for what is wrong — “It’s all your fault that I lost my temper.”
- Apologizes for violent behavior — “I promise I’ll never do it again.”
- Makes excuses for violent behavior — “I only hit you because I was drunk/high.”

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Studies suggest that young women ages 16-19 are three and a half times more likely than the general population to experience rape, attempted rape, or other forms of sexual assault. It is important that you talk to teens about sexual assault and ways to help reduce the risk of being assaulted. These include:

- Going to parties and social gatherings with friends and agreeing to consistently watch out for each other.
- Knowing your sexual limitations and being assertive about sharing them.
- Trusting your instincts and leaving a situation if it feels uncomfortable.

Let teens know that, despite precautions, sexual assault can happen to anybody, and that it is never their fault. Teens may be reluctant to disclose sexual assault because they are ashamed, because they were using drugs or alcohol at the time of the attack or because they feel responsible for what has happened. Let teens in your life know that they can come to you with problems and that you will always offer compassionate and non-judgmental support.

IF YOU SUSPECT A TEEN YOU CARE ABOUT IS EXPERIENCING DATING VIOLENCE:

Express concern. Tell her/him that you are concerned for her/his safety. Point out that what is happening in this relationship is not “normal” and that everybody deserves respect and equality in dating relationships.

Say: “If you feel afraid, it may be abuse. Sometimes people behave in ways that are scary and make you feel threatened, even without using physical violence. Trust your instincts.”

Be supportive. Listen quietly and let her/him tell the whole story. Provide information and non-judgmental support. If she/he does not want to talk to you, help her/him find another trusted individual to talk to.

Say: “The abuse is not your fault. You are not to blame, no matter how guilty the person doing this to you is trying to make you feel. Your partner should not be doing this to you.”

Help develop a safety plan. Advise her/him that safety needs to be her/his highest priority and that it is important to think about how best to avoid potentially dangerous situations. Some things to consider:

- Changing class schedules or schools
- Using a buddy system for going to school, classes and after school activities
- Changing school locker or lock
- Getting a new cell phone number
- Changing routes to/from school and other activities
- Identifying a safe place to go and people to call in an emergency
- Getting help from school administrators, counselors, the local domestic violence program and/or law enforcement
- Seeking a restraining order

Let this person make her/his own decision about whether/when to leave the relationship: There are many reasons people remain in abusive relationships. If a teen tells you she/he does plan to break up with an abusive partner, advise her/him that the break needs to be definite and final. Support this young person’s decision and be ready to help. Let this young person know that abusers are often most violent when their partners attempt to leave, and, therefore, that it is important to think carefully about how to stay safe and avoid being alone with the abuser.

Say: “It is the abuser who has a problem, not you. It is not your responsibility to help this person change.”