



## WARNING SIGNS OF BEING A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE

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

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



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**For additional information or help with teen dating violence call:**

**National Domestic Abuse Hotline:  
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

*This tip card is part of a series originated by R. Sege, MD, PhD, The Floating Hospital for Children and New England Medical Center/Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston, MA and developed with the Massachusetts Medical Society's Committee on Violence, chaired by E. Alpert, MD, MPH, Boston University School of Medicine and Public Health. Author: Carole A. Sousa Co-sponsored by the Massachusetts Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics and the Massachusetts Medical Society Alliance. Copyright 1997 Massachusetts Medical Society. This card may be duplicated for distribution without profit.*



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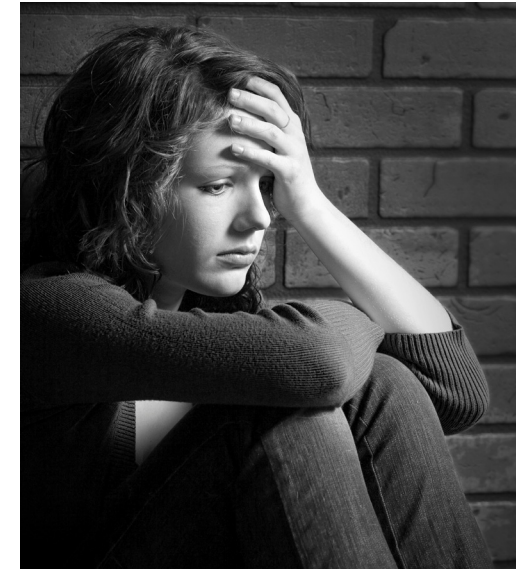


R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

Relationship Empowerment for Students, Parents, Educators & Community Through Theatre

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

## What Parents Need to Know



**Myth** "Oh, it's not that serious."

**Fact** More than one in ten teenagers experience physical violence in a dating relationship.

**Myth** "It only happens to kids from bad homes."

**Fact** Dating violence can happen in all types of homes and in families of all cultures, income levels and educational backgrounds. Teen dating violence is NOT limited to families with a history of violence.

**Myth** "It can't happen to my child!"

**Fact** Boys, as well as girls, can be victims of dating violence. It can occur in any type of relationship, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual.

## WARNING SIGNS OF A PARTNER WHO 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 other's opinions seriously, uses putdowns when alone or with friends
- Uses guilt trips– "If you really loved me, you would..."
- Blames the victim for violent behavior– "It's because of you that I get so mad."
- Apologizes for violent behavior– "I promise I'll never do it again."

## WHY TEENS DON'T TELL PARENTS OR FRIENDS ABOUT THE VIOLENCE

### They are:

- afraid their parents will make them break up.
- embarrassed and ashamed.
- afraid of getting hurt.
- convinced that it is their fault or that their parents will blame them or will be disappointed.
- afraid of losing privileges like being able to stay out late or use the car.

### They:

- have little or no experience with healthy dating relationships.
- believe being involved with someone is the most important thing in their life.
- confuse jealousy with love
- do not realize they are being abused.
- do not think friends and others would believe this is happening.
- have lost touch with friends
- know their abuser acts nice–sometimes.

## TIPS FOR PARENTS

- It is never too early to teach self respect. No one has the right to tell your teenager who to see, what to do or what to wear. No one has the right to hit or control anyone else.
- Give your teenager a chance to talk. Listen quietly to the whole story.
- If you suspect your teenager is already involved with an abusive partner:

- Tell your teenager you are there to help–not judge
- If your teenager doesn't want to talk to you find another trusted person to talk with.
- If your teenager tries to break up with an abusive partner, advise the break to be definite and final. Support your teenager's decision and be ready to help.
- Take whatever safety measures are necessary:
  - Have friends available so your teenager does not have to walk alone.
  - Consider changing class schedules or getting help from the guidance counselor, school principal or police, if necessary.

Ask for teen dating violence prevention and intervention programs in your teenager's school.

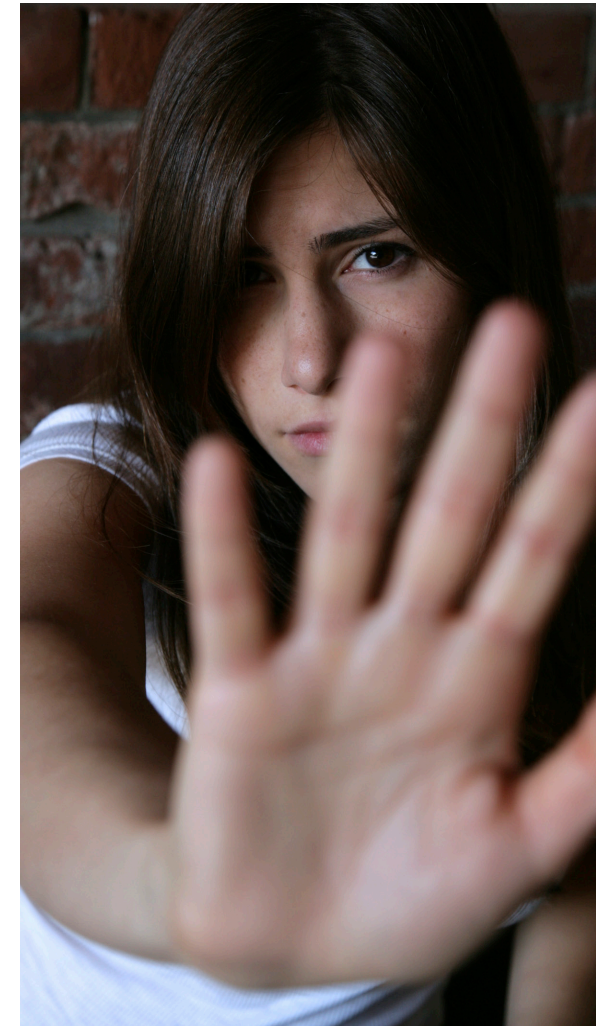
## WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO YOUR TEEN

- "I care about what happens to you. I love you and I want to help you."
- "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. Pay attention to your gut feelings."
- "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."
- "It is the abuser who has the problem, not you. It is not your responsibility to help this person change."

It is important to talk about this. Many people who have been victims of dating violence have been able to change their lives after talking to others. If you don't want to talk to me, find someone you trust and talk with that person."

## REMEMBER

The teen years are when sexual feelings develop. It is a time when dating starts and teenagers are experimenting with different types of relationships. These are the years when it is fun and exciting to meet someone new" and sad and difficult to break up. But abuse has no place in a healthy relationship.



## DATING VIOLENCE CAN TAKE MANY FORMS:

**PHYSICAL:** shoving, hitting, punching

**VERBAL:** yelling, screaming, put-downs

**EMOTIONAL:** spreading rumors, lying, possessiveness

**SEXUAL:** unwanted touching

**PSYCHOLOGICAL:** manipulation, mind games, guilt tripping

*Dating violence can even lead to rape and murder.*