Teen Dating Abuse & Violence

One out of every 11 high school teens experiences some form of abuse and/or violence during a dating relationship. Some level of teasing and "making fun" is considered harmless. But problems can develop if these behaviors become frequent, intense, abusive and/or violent. Many teens do not report abuse and/or violence. They are afraid to tell family and friends. They may also be afraid of retaliation from the abuser if that person learns a report was made.

THREE COMMON TYPES OF ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS DURING DATING RELATIONSHIPS:

1. **Verbal/emotional abuse.** This can include:
   - Verbal threats.
   - Bullying.
   - Insults.
   - Public embarrassment.
   - Damaging something that belongs to the victim.

2. **Physical abuse. Moderate** forms include acts of:
   - Scratching.
   - Grabbing.
   - Slamming against a wall.
   - Pushing.
   - Slapping.
   - Kicking.
   - Bending back fingers.
   - Arm twisting.
   - Biting.
   - Shoving.
   - Forcing a victim out of a car.
   - Throwing something at the victim.

   Physical abuse. Severe forms include acts of:
   - Choking.
   - Burning.
   - Beating up.
   - Hitting with a fist or other hard object.
   - Assaulting with a knife or weapon.

3. **Sexual abuse.** This can include acts of touching that the victim finds undesirable. (Fondling, and/or forcing the victim to engage in any act of sex.)

HEALTH EFFECTS

- Dating abuse/violence can have negative effects on health. These effects can last months or years past the acts of abuse and/or violence. Abused/injured teens are more likely to do poorly in school, abuse alcohol or street and prescription drugs, and develop eating problems. Some become depressed even to the point of thinking about or attempting suicide.
- Abused teens often carry the patterns of violence into future relationships. Physically abused teens are three times more likely than their non-abused peers to experience violence during college. In adulthood, they are more likely to be involved in intimate partner violence.

RISK FACTORS

Teens report dating abuse more often than other age groups. Among teens, boys often start the violence and use greater force. Girls are more likely than boys to be the victims of sexual abuse. Studies show that people who abuse their dating partners are more depressed, have lower self-esteem, and are more aggressive than peers. Other "red flags" for dating abuse include:

- Use of threats or violence to solve problems.
- Alcohol or drug use.
- Inability to manage anger or frustration.
- Poor social skills.
- Association with violent friends.
- Problems at school.

- Lack of parental supervision, support, or discipline.
- Witnessing abuse at home.

PREVENTION

The goal is to stop abuse and/or violence before it starts. Strategies that promote healthy relationships are vital. During the preteen and teen years, young people are learning skills they need to form positive relationships with others. This is an ideal time to promote healthy relationships and prevent patterns of dating violence that can last into adulthood.

- **Prevention programs** address the attitudes and behaviors linked with dating abuse. One example is *Safe Dates.* It is a school-based program designed to change gender norms and improve problem solving skills.
- Community efforts such as parenting support and mentoring programs have also been shown to prevent violence.

RESOURCES AND WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Safe Dates: http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=141
Choose Respect Initiative
www.cdc.gov/chooserespect/
National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
National Sexual Assault Online Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
National Sexual Violence Resource Center
www.nsvrc.org
National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center
www.safeyouth.org
National Center for Victims of Crime - Dating Violence Resource Center
1-800-FYI-CALL
http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB_DatingViolenceResourceCenter101

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