

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time



Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

Did you know that in a recent national survey, 1 in 10 teens reported being hit or physically hurt on purpose by a boyfriend or girlfriend at least once in the 12 months before the survey? Additionally, during the 12 months before the survey, 1 in 10 teens reported they had been kissed, touched, or physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to at least once by someone they were dating.

Violence is related to certain risk factors. Risks of having unhealthy relationships increase for teens who:

- Believe that dating violence is acceptable
- Are depressed, anxious, or have other symptoms of trauma
- Display aggression towards peers or display other aggressive behaviors
- Use drugs or illegal substances
- Engage in early sexual activity and have multiple sexual partners
- Have a friend involved in dating violence
- Have conflicts with a partner
- Witness or experience violence in the home

You can help your kids:

- Develop skills for healthy and safe relationships
- Set expectations for how they want to be treated
- Recognize when a relationship is unhealthy
- Support friends dealing with unhealthy relationships

Watch for signs that your teen's partner may be violent.

If your teen is in a relationship with someone who uses violence, your teen may:

- Avoid friends, family, and school activities
- Make excuses for a partner's behavior
- Look uncomfortable or fearful around a partner
- Lose interest in favorite activities
- Get lower grades in school
- Have unexplained injuries, like bruises or scratches

Watch for signs that your teen may be violent.

Teens who use physical, emotional, or sexual violence to control their partners need help to stop.

- Is jealous and possessive
- Blames other people for anything that goes wrong
- Damages or ruins a partner's things
- Wants to control someone else's decisions
- Constantly texts or calls a partner
- Posts embarrassing information about a partner on websites like Facebook (including sexual information or pictures)

Take steps to make a difference:

- Be a role model – treat your kids and others with respect.
- Start talking to your kids about healthy relationships early – before they start dating.
- Get involved with efforts to prevent dating violence at your teen's school.
- If you are worried about your teen, call the National Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 or text "loveis" to 22522.

It's best to start talking about healthy relationships before your child starts dating. Start conversations about what to look for in a romantic partner. For example, you could ask your child:

- How do you want to be treated?
- How do you want to feel about yourself when you are with that person?
- What makes a relationship healthy?
 - Both people feel respected, supported, and valued
 - Both people make decisions together
 - Both people have friends and interests outside of the relationship
 - The couple settles disagreements with open and honest communication
 - There are more good times than bad
- What makes a relationship unhealthy?
 - One person tries to change the other
 - One person makes most or all of the decisions
 - One or both people drop friends and interests outside of the relationship
 - One or both people yell, threaten, hit, or throw things during arguments
 - One person makes fun of the other's opinions or interests
 - One person keeps track of the other all the time by calling, texting, or checking in with friends
 - There are more bad times than good

