

What is Teen Dating Violence?

Defining Teen Dating Violence (also often referenced as “teen dating abuse”) is sometimes difficult, especially as an outside adult looking in. In healthy teen relationships, as in adult relationships, couples work to communicate with one another, embrace each other’s differences, actively listen, and compromise. Teen dating relationships are, of course, not perfect, because A) What relationship is? and B) Often this is the first dating relationship these individuals have ever had, and developing healthy relationship skills is a lifelong process.

So what is teen dating violence?

Dating violence is the intentional use of destructive behaviors by one person to exert power and control over their dating partner. Abusive people may sometimes exhibit patterns - but not always, nor is their abuse always predictable. They use many tactics to gain and maintain control over a partner, such as psychological or emotional abuse, as well as physical and sexual violence, stalking, and even cyber abuse. They may or may not use physical violence. Physical violence does not have to occur for someone to be considered a victim of teen dating violence. Emotional, verbal, and psychological abuse can be just as, if not more, destructive.

This exertion of power and control can and will look different depending on the situation and the abuser’s tactics to gain and maintain control over their partner, but what follows are some **warning signs**. Abusive tactics include, but are not limited to:

- Checking their partner’s cell phone, email, or social media without permission
- Repeatedly calling or texting their partner to check in on them or figure out where they are
- Constantly putting partner down
- Extreme jealousy or insecurity
- Explosive temper
- Isolation from family or friends
- Making false accusations
- Mood swings
- Physically hurting partner in any way
- Possessiveness
- Telling partner what to do
- Pressuring or forcing sex onto partner
- Threatening to “out” their partner or reveal their partner’s secrets
- Threatening to harm themselves if their partner does not comply with their wishes

TAKE A STAND FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Again, it is important to remember that all relationships have bumps along the way, so if you see some of these behaviors in your students' relationships it does not necessarily equal abuse. Abuse is about **one person exerting power and control over the other**. Although the abuse may appear to be mutual, there is always a primary offender. Teen dating violence is not an isolated event. It occurs frequently, is intentional, and escalates in severity over time.

Are you a visual person? Check out the following documents to understand teen dating violence better:

[Teen Power and Control Wheel](#)
[Is abuse really a "cycle"?](#)