

about teenage relationship abuse



Teenage relationship abuse, or dating abuse, is characterized by an imbalance of power that is maintained through intimidation, coercion and violence. Victims in abusive relationships lose self-confidence and self-esteem and withdraw from friends and family members. Abuse is often physical, but it can be verbal and emotional - constant insults, isolation, name calling, controlling what someone wears - and it can include sexual abuse. Relationship abuse can make the victim feel fearful that something they do or say will provoke their abuser.

what we know about teenage relationship abuse

- 1 in 5 teens who have been in a serious relationship report being hit, slapped or pushed by a partner.
- 1 in 3 girls who have been in a serious relationship say they've been concerned about being physically hurt by their partner.
- Fed by a commercial hip hop culture that celebrates aggressive, physical and often misogynistic masculinity, many teenagers consider abuse normal.
- Girls often minimize abusive behavior because they are fearful that if they speak out, the boy's future will be destroyed.
- Adolescent relationships may be particularly prone to violence because of the dependency that partners have on each other for social acceptance and self-esteem.
- Abuse usually begins when teens are already in a relationship. Escalating in frequency and severity, abusive incidents may be followed by periods of affection and intimacy. The pattern that evolves, described as a cycle of violence, can be extremely difficult to break.
- Girls can and do act violently toward boys, but females assaulted by male partners represent the vast majority of victims of teenage dating violence.
- Teenage relationship abuse occurs across all lines of race, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, disability and other individual differences and is present in urban, suburban and rural communities.
- Teens often don't feel comfortable talking to parents or friends because they get frustrated and often just want them to break up with their boyfriend or girlfriend. Talking to a teacher or counselor may feel safer.

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warning signs of an abusive relationship

You may be in an unsafe relationship if your partner:

- Blames you for his/her problems or for the hurtful things they say or do
- Tries to control your behavior - where you go, who you spend time with, what you wear or what you do
- Criticizes you frequently - your appearance, intelligence, ability to make decisions
- Humiliates you in public
- Texts, calls or IMs you excessively
- Feels he/she owns you and has certain rights over you
- Is extremely jealous of your friends and family; accuses you of being unfaithful when you interact with people of the opposite sex
- Isolates you - doesn't allow you to see your friends or family; needs to know where you are all the time; wants you to spend all your time together
- Angers easily, making it important for you to keep him/her from getting angry
- Believes in definite male-female roles
- Makes you afraid of what he/she will do if you end the relationship
- Threatens you, makes you afraid of him/her
- Says he/she can't live without you

where to turn for help

The YWCA Evanston/North Shore offers the following teen relationship abuse education and support resources to the community:

- **Building Healthy Relationships:** School-based support and educational groups for students
- **Education and Outreach:** Educational resources and workshops for teachers, parents and community organizations
- **Counseling and Support:** Service provided on a group and individual basis for teens and/or parents

To access any of these resources, contact the YWCA at 847-864-8445.

If you or someone you know is experiencing teen relationship abuse, free confidential help is available:

- **Talk to a trained counselor at the YWCA Evanston/North Shore:** 847-864-8445
- **Call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:** 1-866-331-9474 TTY: 1-866-331-8453
- **Call the YWCA's crisis line anytime, day or night:** local: 847-864-8780 toll-free: 877-718-1868
- **Learn more on the National TDA Helpline website:** www.loveisrespect.org