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HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS!

National Teen Dating Awareness & Prevention Month

Teen dating violence (TDV) is also referred to as “dating violence”. According to the CDC it affects millions of teens in the U.S. each year. Dating violence can take place in person, online, or through technology. It occurs between two people in a close relationship. It is a type of intimate partner violence that can include the following types of behavior:

- **Physical Abuse**
 - Hitting, kicking, and pushing
- **Emotional & Verbal Abuse**
 - Name calling, insulting, and threatening
- **Stalking**
 - Repeated, unwanted attention and contact by a current or former partner, fear or safety concern for an individual victim or someone close to the victim
- **Sexual Violence**
 - Forcing a partner to take part in a sex act
- **Digital Abuse**
 - Telling someone who they can or can’t follow or be friends with on social media
 - Sending someone negative, insulting, or threatening messages or emails
 - Insulting or humiliating someone in their posts online, including posting unflattering photos or videos
 - Sending, requesting, or pressuring someone to send unwanted explicit photos or videos, or otherwise compromising messages
 - Looking through someone’s phone or checking up on their pictures, texts, and phone records

FACTS ABOUT TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

Teens often think some behaviors like teasing and name calling are a “normal” part of a relationship, but these behaviors can become abusive and develop into serious forms of violence.

- **Nearly 1 in 11 female and about 1 in 15 male high school students** report having experienced physical dating violence in the last year.
- **About 1 in 9 female and 1 in 36 male high school students** report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.

Unhealthy or violent relationships can have severe short and long-term effects on a developing teen. For example, youth who are victims of TDV are more likely to:

- Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs, and alcohol.
- Think about suicide.

Teen Dating Violence is Preventable

Supporting the development of healthy, respectful, and nonviolent relationships can help reduce the occurrence of TDV and prevent its harmful effects. During the pre-teen and teen years, it is important for youth to begin learning the skills needed to create and maintain healthy relationships. These skills include things like how to manage feelings and how to communicate in a healthy way.

Abuse in a dating relationship is preventable because once you recognize the signs, you can begin seeking ways to move toward safety. Remember you deserve to be respected and engage in a healthy and loving relationship.

What if you find yourself in an abusive situation?

Steps to consider next include:

- Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or campus counselor.
- Create a safety plan, which is a personalized, practical plan to improve your safety while experiencing abuse, preparing to leave an abusive situation, or after you leave.
- Obtain a restraining order.
- Nude photos or videos of someone under the age of 18 could be considered child pornography, which is illegal to own or distribute.
- Save or document threatening messages, photos, videos, or voicemails as evidence of abuse.
- Once you share a post or message, it's no longer under your control. Abusive partners may save or forward anything you share, so be careful sending content you wouldn't want others to see.
- Know and understand your privacy settings. Social media platforms allow users to control how their information is shared and who has access to it. These settings are often customizable and may be found in the privacy section of the website.
- Be mindful when checking-in places online, either by sharing your location in a post or by posting a photo with distinguishable backgrounds.
- Ask your friends to always seek permission from you before posting content that could compromise your privacy and do the same for them.
- Avoid contact with your abuser in any capacity, through any technology, online or in person. Consider changing your phone number if the abuse and harassment doesn't stop.

How do you know if you are in an abusive teen dating relationship?

Questions to determine whether you are in an unhealthy relationship:

- Does your partner isolate you from your friends and family?
- Does your partner make you feel as if everything is your fault?
- Does your partner physically, verbally, emotionally, mentally and/or financially abuse you?
- Does your partner control where you go?
- Does your partner control what you say?
- Does your partner control what you wear?
- Does your partner threaten you in any way?
- Does your partner force you to do things you don't want to do?
- Does your partner make you cry more than smile?
- Does your partner argue with you all of the time?

Answering "YES" to any of these questions is a warning sign that you may be in an unhealthy relationship.

A healthy relationship is being in any type of relationship that allows you to be yourself and not change who you are because of someone else. Trust your instincts! When your interactions with someone does not feel right, be prepared to make the necessary decisions to protect yourself. There should be a feeling of love and equality in a healthy relationship. Love does not hurt. A relationship should consist of patience, kindness and understanding.





What does a healthy relationship look like?

Characteristics of Healthy Relationships:

- You don't have to be with your partner 24/7. Have respect for privacy and space.
- Your partner encourages you to spend time with friends without them and to participate in activities that you enjoy.
- You feel comfortable expressing your opinions and concerns to your partner.
- You feel physically safe and your partner doesn't force you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Your partner respects your wishes and feelings, and you can compromise and negotiate when there are disagreements or conflicts.

The Foundation of a Healthy Relationship Includes:

- **Boundaries:** You and your partner can find ways to meet each other's needs in ways that you both feel comfortable with.
- **Communication:** You and your partner can share your feelings, even when you don't agree, in a way that makes the other person feel safe, heard, and not judged.
- **Trust:** You and your partner building trust over time allows for vulnerability, knowing that they can rely on the other person.
- **Consent:** Giving consent means that you are okay with what is happening, and that no one is forcing you or guilt you into doing anything that you don't want to do. Consent can be given and taken back at any time and giving consent once does not mean you automatically give consent in the future.



Positive Relationships Between Parents & Children

Please keep in mind that in some abusive relationships, trying to enforce boundaries, honest communication, trust, and other healthy behaviors could put your safety at risk. Abuse is about power and control! Someone who is abusive might not want to give up their control over you. If you feel like someone is disrespecting you or is being abusive, get help. You're not alone.

The primary foundation to children understanding healthy relationships begins at home with the parent-child dynamics. This relationship lays the foundation for the child's personality, life choices and overall behavior. Ultimately, parents want what is best for their child and a strong parent-child relationship can help lead to better outcomes for children.

Two benefits to having a positive relationship with your child are:

- 1) Having your children know what it feels like to encounter a positive relationship, which will make it easier for them to recognize a toxic relationship.
- 2) Creating a safe space for your child to be able to feel vulnerable enough to seek help from you if they are in a violent relationship.

You can build a positive relationship with your child by:

- Being in the moment with your child.
- Spending quality time with your child.
- Creating a caring environment of trust and respect.



Being in the Moment

How it supports positive parent-child relationships

Being in the moment is about tuning in and thinking about what's going on with your child. It shows your child that you care about the things that matter to them, which is the basis for a strong relationship.

Here are some ideas for being in the moment with your child:

- Show acceptance by allowing your child to make some decisions and try not to give directions all the time.
- Listen to your child and try to tune in to your child's real feelings.
- Stop and think about what your child's behavior is telling you. For example, if your teenage child is hanging around in the kitchen but not talking much, they might just want to be close to you. You could offer a hug or let them help with the cooking, without needing to talk.

Quality Time

Why it's important in positive relationships

Positive relationships between you and your child are built on quality time. Time together is how you get to know about each other's experiences, thoughts, feelings and changing interests. This shows that you value and appreciate your child, which is great for your relationship.

Quality time can happen anytime and anywhere, in the middle of ordinary days and situations. It can be shared through a good conversation in the car or by checking in when they are lounging in their room. Engaging in their space helps you learn more about them. These moments give you the chance to communicate positive messages with smiles, laughter, eye contact, and hugs.

You can make the most of time together by minimizing disruptions and distractions. This can be as easy as putting away your phone. It helps your child know that you're keen to spend uninterrupted time with them. Planning some regular one-on-one time with your child can help you make the time count. **Your child learns and develops through spending time and interacting with you.**

Trust and Respect

How to nurture it in positive relationships

Trust and respect are essential to a positive parent-child relationship. It becomes more of a two-way street as your child gets older.

You can nurture trust and respect in your relationship by:

- Being available when your child needs support, care, or help.
- Sticking to your promises, so your child learns to trust what you say.
- Getting to know your child and value them for who they are. If your child loves football, cheer your child on or ask about the best players. Showing respect for your child's feelings and opinions encourages your child to keep sharing them with you.
- Listening without judging or getting upset, when your child expresses a different opinion from yours. This sends the message that you'll listen and help your child with difficult issues or situations in the future.

References

1. Fast Facts: Preventing Teen Dating Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC
2. Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control