



# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

The term “dating” means different things to different people, but generally refers to “a close relationship between two people.” That relationship could be long- or short-term, involve sex or not, be committed or open, or it could be casual or very serious. Dating violence and abuse can occur in any type of relationship.

Teen dating violence is commonly defined as a pattern of abuse or threat of abuse against a teenaged dating partner. It may include one or more types of abuse: verbal, psychological/emotional, physical, sexual, digital, and/or stalking. Digital violence can include repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner online. Teen dating violence occurs across all groups and all cultures, and is even being reported among younger teens and tweens.

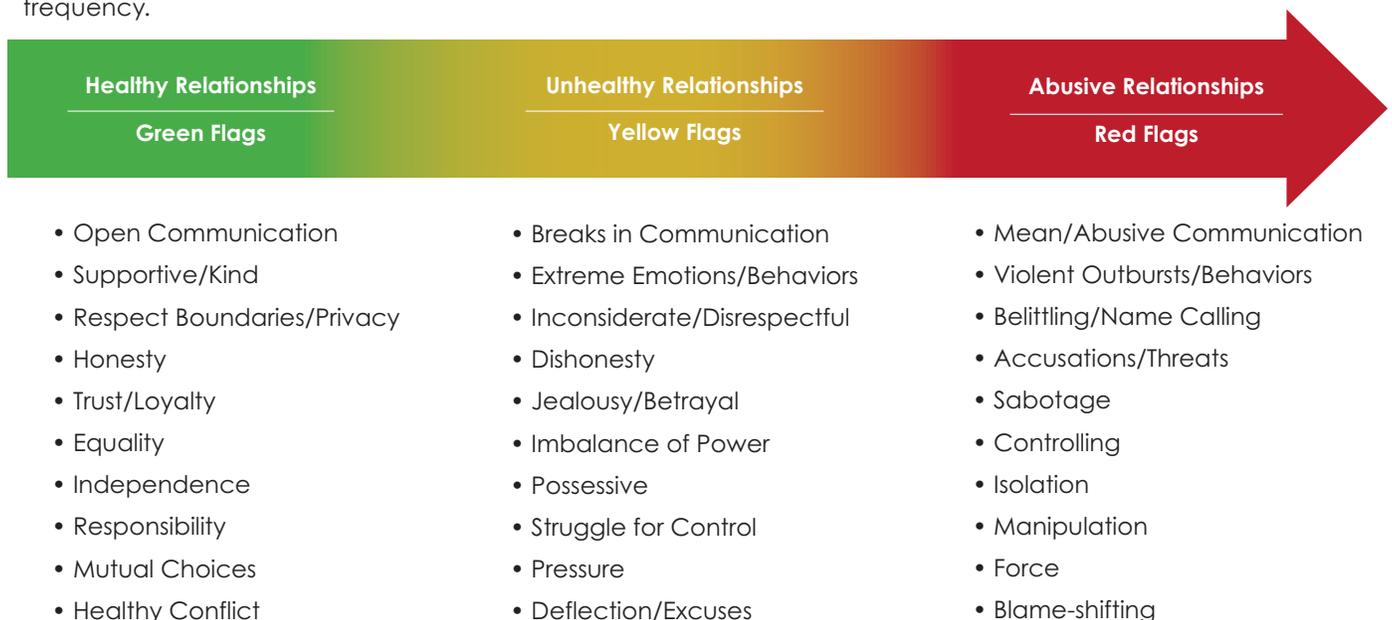
## HERE ARE SOME STATISTICS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

- » Almost 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner each year.<sup>1</sup>
- » About 1 in 9 female and 1 in 36 male high school students report having experienced sexual dating violence in the last year.<sup>2</sup>
- » Only 33% of teens who have been in an abusive relationship ever tell anyone.<sup>3</sup>
- » 81% of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.<sup>4</sup>

Research shows that teens who experience dating violence are more likely to participate in risky behaviors such as drug, alcohol, or tobacco use, or risky sexual behavior, and often have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

## RELATIONSHIP CONTINUUM

In order to help protect teens from teen dating violence, it's important to understand what acceptable and non-acceptable behavior is. These behaviors occur along a continuum and often increase in intensity and/or frequency.





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## BE AWARE OF THESE EARLY WARNING SIGNS IN TEENS:

- Your child or your child's partner is extremely jealous or possessive
- You notice unexplained marks or bruises
- Your child's partner emails or texts excessively
- You notice that your son or daughter is depressed or anxious
- Your son or daughter stops participating in extracurricular activities or other interests
- Your child stops spending time with other friends and family
- Your child's partner abuses other people or animals
- Your child begins to dress differently

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT TEEN DATING VIOLENCE?

1. Check with your child's school to see what type of school-based program/curriculum they may be using that addresses Teen Dating Violence. If they are not using a program, encourage them to learn more about and use the *MBF Teen Safety Matters*® program for middle and high schools. Visit [www.mbfpreventioneducation.org](http://www.mbfpreventioneducation.org) for more information.
2. Start the conversation! Talking to teens about dating can be awkward, but it's an important conversation to have as they begin navigating teen relationships. Teaching teens about body safety, consent, and relationship abuse can help protect them from this type of victimization. Learn more about the topics you should discuss with your teen - Consent, Respecting Boundaries, Clear Communication, Honesty, and Empathy - at <https://www.d2l.org/talking-teens-healthy-relationships/>.
3. Help them recognize that abuse is not normal, is NOT acceptable, and NOT their fault. Be supportive and listen patiently.
4. Make sure they're prepared. Help them develop a Safety Plan, which is a practical guide to help them lower their risk of being hurt by an abuser. It can help them identify Safe Adults, friends, and family they can reach out to when needed. A sample Safety Plan can be found at <http://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf>.
5. Ask your child to take the Healthy Relationship Quiz at <http://www.loveisrespect.org/for-someone-else/is-my-relationship-healthy-quiz/>.

### Sources:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Physical Dating Violence Among High School Students—United States, 2003," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, May 19, 2006, Vol. 55, No. 19
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teendatingviolence/fastfact.html>
3. Liz Claiborne Inc., conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited, (February 2005)
4. Love is Respect: [https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Dating\\_Abuse\\_Statistics.pdf](https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Dating_Abuse_Statistics.pdf)



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