

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month



Dating Violence, similar to domestic violence, is a pattern of abusive tactics used to gain and maintain power and control in a dating relationship. Abuse can be emotional, verbal, sexual and/or physical. Unique aspects to teen dating violence include more use and abuse of technology, abusive partners going to the same school, and adults not taking teen relationships as seriously.

Warning Signs of Dating Violence

Their partner constantly checks up on your teen through calls and texts (wanting to know where they are and who they're with); acts possessive or controlling; calls your teen degrading names; pressures your teen into sexual activity; limits whom your teen hangs out with; makes your teen afraid to disagree; and blames your teen for things they didn't do.

Why do teens stay in abusive relationships?

Like with adults, there are many barriers that make leaving difficult for teens. Reasons include fear of being hurt, stalked, or threatened by their abusive partner, being in love with the partner and hoping they will change, not recognizing their relationship as abusive or feeling it's normal, embarrassment about the abuse, feeling like it's their fault and they don't deserve better, fear that others will not support or believe them, and not knowing about supportive resources.

A Few Statistics

Some research suggests as many as 1 in 3 teens in the U.S. will be a victim of emotional, verbal, sexual, or physical abuse from a dating partner. Females aged 16-24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. Only 33% of teens who were in a violent relationship ever told anyone about the abuse. 81% of parents believe dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.

What can I do to be helpful to a teen that's getting abused?

- Listen, believe, and support them. Tell them that the abuse is not their fault. Tell them that they are not alone and that help is available. They deserve a safe and healthy relationship.
- Talk to the teen in private. Tell them you're concerned for their safety and you want to help. Share information about Hope House services. Offer to take them to any counseling sessions to be supportive.
- Be non-judgmental. Make it clear you don't blame them and that you respect their choices.
- Role model respectful behavior and teach youth early and often about healthy relationships based on respect, equality, trust, honesty, good communication, and support. Show them LoveIsRespect.org and let them know they can call 1-866-331-9474, chat online, or text loveis to 22522.

For more information, resources, and recommended websites, please visit hopehousescw.org/teen-dating-violence

Free and Confidential Services

The mission of Hope House is to prevent abuse and provide support to victims of domestic and sexual abuse in Sauk, Columbia, Adams, Juneau, and Marquette Counties. Services are free and confidential: a 24/7 helpline, supportive counseling, legal help, support groups, safety planning, 24/7 emergency response, shelter, and community education. Call Hope House to request a presentation for an adult or youth group.

Hope House of South Central Wisconsin

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24-hour helpline: 1-800-584-6790

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of South Central Wisconsin