

Parents Guide: Helping An Abused Teen

Teen dating violence is similar to and can be as lethal as adult relationship violence. Both include hitting, yelling, threatening, name calling and other forms of verbal, sexual, emotional and physical abuse. These facts make it very important for parents to be aware of abusive relationships.

Things to Keep in Mind When Talking to an Abused Teen

- Make sure the timing is right. Talk about the abuse when you are sharing time together.
- Use "I" statements when describing your feelings. Let your teen know how concerned you are about her/his safety, well-being and security.
- Be sure to have specific examples to share with your Daughter or son that concern you.
- Listen and believe your teen. Speak with sensitivity, support and care.
- Remember, if your teen does open up to you, it is possible that you will hear uncomfortable details. It is imperative that you are nonjudgmental by focusing on resolving the problem (the behavior) rather than criticizing your teen.
- Be a comfort zone for your teen. Her/his self-confidence may have been lowered by the abusive partner.
- Be a role model, display a healthy relationship with your own partner.
- Help your teen create a safety plan for when she/he is at school and out with friends.
- Contact your local law enforcement agency or Family Guidance Center about procedures for obtaining restraining or stay-away orders.

Things Not to Say or Do

- Do not be critical of your teen or her/him partner.
- Don't ask blaming questions such as: "Why don't you break up with her/him?" or "What did you say to provoke your partner?"
- Don't pressure your teen into making decisions.
- Don't talk to both teens together.
- Don't assume that the victim wants to leave the abusive relationship. Assist her/him in assessing the situation.

How Can You Tell If Your Teen is a victim of Teen Dating Violence

- Is your teen withdrawing from school activities?
- Has your daughter or son become secretive, ashamed or hostile to (or isolated from) parents, family or friends because of the relationship?
- Does your teen's partner call several times a night or show up unexpectedly to "check up?"
- Does your son or daughter apologize for her/his partner's behavior?
- Has your teen stopped hanging out with friends?

Other Warning Signs:

- Physical bruises, or damaged personal property. Be aware of explanations that seem out of place or changes in make-up or dress.
- The use of alcohol or other drugs could be a teen's response to pressure from her/his partner. It may also be an attempt to numb pain or emotions. However, substance abuse is no excuse for or escape from violence. If alcohol or other drugs were taken away, the underlying cause and the violence in the relationship may still not be resolved.



Family Guidance Center
17 HWY 70, SE
Hickory, NC 28602

For Confidential Help, Call First Step
Phone: 828-322-1400
Crisis Line: 828-228-1787