

For Our Services Call: 828-322-1400  
24 Hour Crisis Line: 828-228-1787



**February is  
Teen Dating  
Violence  
Awareness Month**

**\*Find more tips on  
page 2 and 3\***

# February | 2011

# Spotlight On Domestic Violence

*First Step Newsletter  
A Program of  
The Family Guidance Center*

THE MISSION OF FAMILY GUIDANCE CENTER'S FIRST STEP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND TO INCREASE COMMUNITY'S AWARENESS ABOUT THE PROBLEM.

## February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

### *Love Shouldn't Hurt Campaign*

The first thought of February is love, not hurt.



Cupids shooting arrows and heart shaped boxes are presented everywhere. The

smell of flowers fills the air.

The Family Guidance Center has a different perspective on February. This month's theme "**Love Shouldn't Hurt**" will be shared throughout the community to promote **Love Is Caring, Not Hurting**.

February has been declared Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. **1 in 3 girls who has been in a serious relationship say they've been concerned about being physically hurt by their partner.** In the rapid growth of technology, teenagers can easily be controlled within a dating relationship.

First Step's Domestic Violence Community Educator is making an effort to reach as many teenagers as possible, teaching about teen dating violence and healthy relationships.

Below are some Warning Signs of a victim of teen dating violence.

- Depression or loss of self confidence
- Receives constant texts, calls, emails
- Is isolated from family and friends
- Has unexplained bruises/marks
- Withdrawn from school activities or drop in grades
- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Use of drugs or alcohol (could be teens response to pressure from abuser)
- Changes in eating and sleeping

## When I was 18...

Being a community educator, I have met many people who have been affected by domestic violence. One day, after I spoke about domestic violence, I was instantly stopped by a young woman. She told me she is a survivor of an abusive relationship that happened when she was 18 years old. I decided to interview her to promote awareness of teen dating violence.



### **What's your story about teen dating violence?**

At first, we were friends. I started dating him when I was 18 years old, and stayed with him for 2 years. The abuse started slow. He began to control me by telling me I couldn't hang out with my friends. If I did hang out with my friends, he would humiliate me in front of them. Many times, he took my car, which kept me from going to work. He would also take my cell phone and look through all my messages and accuse me of cheating on him. My first semester at college, I missed school to spend time with him to prove I was not cheating on him. He took my check card and stole money from me. He took a lot from me, my self-esteem and confidence.

### **Did you realize you were in an abusive relationship?**

When you are 18, you don't think about dating violence. Many times, he made it seem like he was playing around when he would pinch me and leave marks, or punch me in the thighs. I thought, he isn't beating me up, so its not abuse, when really it was abuse because he would not stop when I told him to. I did not realize I was in an abusive relationship until I saw my brother and his wife's healthy relationship. I reflected on my relationship and decided I had to leave him. I loved him and believed he could change, but he proved he could not when he threw my crutches out in the yard and made me go get them. At that time, My ankle was sprained, and I could not walk on it at all. That's when I made the decision to leave him.

## Interviewed Continued

### How did you get help?

I got support from my mom and my co-workers. One night after work, he broke into my car and was waiting for me. He was looking through my phone and accused me of cheating, yet again. I was afraid of him. He began to hit me and bit me so hard he left marks. My co-workers saw the marks and encouraged me to leave him. They told me I did not deserve the abuse.



permission, gets jealous, or tells you how to dress, or who to hang out with, break-up with him. Those are warning signs that he is trying to control you.

### Did your parents know?

My mom worked 3 jobs. At first, she did not, but after awhile, she began to pick up on his controlling behaviors. She had to pick me up sometimes because he would make me get out of the car and he would leave.

### Were there any warning signs that he was abusive?

Looking back, I can see signs that I wish I was more aware of before I started dating him. I heard he was verbally abusive to his ex-girlfriend. He would put her down and call her names. I should have taken his bad history of abuse as a warning sign. Today, I would tell teenage girls if he goes through your phone without

### If you had any advice to give to parents about teen dating violence, what would it be?

Talk about it. The abuse starts out slow, like someone looking through your phone to control you. It's good to know the warning signs. Parents need to have a clear understanding about what a healthy relationship is, so they can talk about it and be a role model for their kids. Talking and emphasizing that no one deserves to be abused can prevent or stop it.



## 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.
- 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 non-judgmental by focusing on resolving the problem (the behavior) rather than criticizing your teen.
- Let your teen have some control in making decisions. Self-esteem and confidence may have been lowered by the abusive partner.
- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.

**81% of parents surveyed believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if**

- Help your teen create a safety plan for when she/he is at school and out with friends.
- Contact First Step for information about procedures for obtaining restraining or stay-away orders.

## Things Not to Say or Do

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



For more information please visit our webpage at [www.fgcservices.com](http://www.fgcservices.com) or call First Step at 828-322-1400



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## How Can I Tell if my Teen is an Abuser?



- Is your son or daughter jealous or possessive?
- Does your teen have an explosive temper?
- Does he/she consistently ridicule, criticize or insult his/her partner?
- Does your teen blame others when he/she gets angry?
- Does your teen exhibit any abusive behaviors toward you, family or friends?

## A Thank You Note for My Teacher

Dear Principals and Teachers,



Thank you for allowing me to speak to your students about teen dating violence. I am honored to visit your classes and experience authenticity with your students. I am amazed by the teens in our community and their willingness to talk about their relationships with me. I believe we can prevent abusive relationships simply by talking to them about teen dating violence and healthy relationships, and I can see the results!

Thank you for your openness and support!

Sincerely, Liz Eller,  
DV Community Educator

## Tips For Parents of Abusive Teens

- Recognize and confront the abusive behavior. Be sure to have specific examples.
- Let him/her know what is not acceptable.
- While being supportive of your teen as a person and his/her efforts to overcome the abusive behavior, you may have to make the difficult decision to report your teen's violence to law enforcement.
- Be a role model for supportive, healthy relationships with your own partner.

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## The Purple Ribbon Thrift Store

Do you have that Valentine's Day outfit ready?

Do you not know what gift of love to buy for the one you love?

Stop by the Purple Ribbon Thrift Store to find all you need:

clothing, gifts, candles, furniture, home items, and décor.

### Shop to Stop Domestic Violence

All Proceeds goes toward  
The Shelter for Battered Women.

Call 828-322-3423 or find us on Facebook



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