

TEEN DATING Are You in a Healthy Relationship?



FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION
IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Abuse in Teen Dating Relationships

Being in a violent or abusive relationship is not just a problem for adults. Teens can be in abusive relationships too. In fact, many people first experience relationship violence when they start dating. This pamphlet will describe the signs of a healthy relationship, set out the signs of an abusive relationship, explore some reasons why teens may stay in abusive relationships, and offer tips to help you stay safe while dating. Having a safety plan may help get you out of dangerous situations when they do happen.

Signs Your Are in a Healthy and Positive Relationship

It's important to know the signs of an abusive relationship - but it's also important to be able to recognize a healthy relationship. Communication is key to a healthy relationship. Here are some signs of a healthy dating relationship:

- It is built on respect, caring and happiness.
- Makes you feel good about yourself because you are valued and respected for who you are.
- You treat each other as equals.
- You can talk about your feelings.
- You are not afraid the other person will make fun of you or put you down.
- When you do disagree, you can talk about your differences in a calm and respectful way.
- You both take responsibility for your own actions.
- You do not blame the other person when things go wrong.
- You have fun together and feel happy.

A healthy relationship takes time, energy and commitment - but it's worth it! ❤️



Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship

When you think of "relationship abuse" or "dating violence", you probably think of hitting, slapping or punching. Most dating relationships don't start out with physical violence. There may be other kinds of abuse - like name calling and put downs. Non-physical abuse may be harder to recognize, especially if it is subtle and said in a joking fashion. But it can be very hurtful too and verbal abuse can be a sign that your relationship may eventually turn violent. Whether the abuse is physical, sexual, emotional or verbal, they have one thing in common - the person you are dating is trying to get control over you. Here are some signs of abuse in teen relationships.

Examples

Jealousy

"I can't stand the thought of other guys looking at you."

Controlling where you go and who you see (including constant contact through phone calls, IMs and emails)

"Where R U? Who R U with? Call me."

Blaming you for everything

"If you didn't dress that way, I wouldn't get so jealous."

Isolating you from friends and family

"I can't believe you would rather hang out with your idiot friends than spend time with me."

Putting you down (abusing you verbally)

"You're lucky I love you, nobody else would."

Threatening harm to themselves

"I can't live without you. If you break up with me, I'll kill myself."

History of abusing others

"My ex told everyone I forced her into having sex - but she's a liar."

Telling you how to dress and criticizing the way you look

"You look like a slob; we're not going anywhere until you change."

Using physical force or threatening harm

"I punched a hole in the wall because you made me so angry - next time it'll be your face."

Forcing you to have sex

"If you really loved me you wouldn't make me stop." Or "It's okay, we don't need to use protection"

Mocking your spiritual beliefs

"I can't believe you want to go to the powwow; it's for losers".

Can You Think of Others?

Why Teens Stay in Abusive Relationships

There are many reasons why teens stay in abusive relationships. Here is what teens sometimes say:

- The relationship started off great. The abuse just kind of crept in. Now it's too hard to leave because everyone thinks we are perfect for each other.
- He wouldn't be jealous if he didn't love me so much.
- The way he treats me is pretty normal - everyone else acts the same way.
- I don't have any money. If I weren't dating I wouldn't get to go anywhere.
- If I complain, I could lose my friends. They are his friends too.
- Things can get pretty intense, but I'm not in an abusive relationship. I've never been hit or pushed around.
- I stay because I know how to give back as good as I take.
- I don't have any transportation so when we go out, I can't just leave if things turn bad.
- Better to have someone who loves you and hurts you, than to have nobody at all.
- That's the way most people show love - isn't it? I pretty much see the same things in my own family.
- I'm afraid of what would happen if I broke off the relationship.

Love Online



Here are some tips for safety when you are meeting people on the Internet - in chat rooms, or on dating sites:

- Do not share personal information on-line - you don't know if the person is really another teen.
- Never share any information that could show who you are, where you live, work or go to school.
- If you develop an on-line relationship, be careful if you are making plans to meet face-to-face.
- Photos and video can easily be shared when you send them on-line or by phone. Do not be pressured to send photos you would not want everyone to see.

For more great tips about staying safe when you surf the Internet, see the RCMP's www.deal.org.

Be careful not to confuse these kinds of acts with love and affection. <

MY PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN



If I am in an abusive dating relationship, I can tell _____ and _____.

(Think of a family member, friend, elder, or doctor you could tell about the abuse)

At school, I will talk to _____.

(Think of a trusted teacher, guidance counsellor or office staff)

If I am stranded or feel unsafe, I can call _____ for a ride home.

If I need to get away quickly from someone who is abusing me, I can go to _____.

(Think of someone who would support you if you showed up unexpectedly)

When I go on a date, I will tell my plans to _____ and _____.

(Think of friends who would know what to do if there is a problem)

In case I need help and don't have my contact list, I will memorize this number _____.

In an emergency, I will call 911 or _____.

(Add the phone number for the police/band constable)

If I am in danger, my code word is _____.

I will share my code word with _____ and _____.

They will know it means 'Call the police. I need help immediately.'

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Tips for Safer Dating

It's not okay for someone to treat you badly and it's not okay for you to treat another person in abusive ways. To protect yourself from abuse, you first have to recognize it. Know the warning signs and be prepared to protect yourself from harm. Think about ways to keep safe when dating.

Here are a few ideas:

- ★ Get to know the person you are dating. When you ask about favourite movies and music, throw in some questions on gender roles, jealousy and past relationships. A few casual questions can sometimes bring out warning signs.
- ★ Consider activities with a group or go on a double-date when you start seeing someone new. Even someone you have known as a friend could act differently as a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- ★ When you go on a date, know exactly what you will be doing and where you will be. Tell a parent or friend and let them know what time to expect you home. Tell your date that you have to call home.
- ★ Be aware that there is an increased risk of violence when drugs and alcohol are being used. Your ability to react to a dangerous situation is lower when you have been using drugs or drinking alcohol.
- ★ When you leave a party, make sure you tell a friend that you are leaving and who you are going with. Ask a friend to call you to make sure you get home safely.
- ★ Tell your date when you do not like his or her behaviour or comments.
- ★ Trust your instincts. If something feels uncomfortable, stay calm and try think of a way to safely leave the situation.
- ★ Choose a "code word" or phrase for family or friends to let them know you need help from an adult or the police right away.

Help Your Friends... What You Say Matters!



Even if you are not in an abusive relationship, you might have a friend who is. Negative changes in your friend's behaviour, like skipping school, falling behind in classes, mood changes, or emotional outbursts of sadness or anger, could be a sign of problems in the relationship. You may even see bruises, burns or other signs of physical harm. Share the information in this pamphlet with your friend. Emphasize that your friend is not to blame for the abuse.

Offer to listen and let your friend talk through the problem without being judgmental. Be supportive, but never pressure a friend to leave the relationship or say they are making poor choices. It can be confusing and lonely to be in an abusive relationship. Having a friend who cares and is not judgmental can make a difference. Encourage your friend to get help from a parent, an elder, a teacher, a counsellor, a doctor or nurse, or someone else they trust. Suggest that your friend make a personal safety plan. There is one at the end of this pamphlet.

If you have a friend who is hurting a girlfriend or boyfriend with harsh words or violence, encourage your friend to get help. For example, suggest that counselling may help the person learn how to have a healthy relationship. If you are not comfortable talking about this with your friend or you are worried that something bad might happen, talk to a trusted adult who can listen and take steps to help protect the person being abused.

Tips for Your Safety When Ending a Relationship

Ending a relationship can sometimes be a dangerous time. If you were in an abusive relationship, the violence may continue or get worse when you break up. Harassing and stalking behaviour may start and that can be very scary. Here are some things that might help increase your safety:

- ★ End the relationship in a public place. Arrange to call or meet a friend or counsellor after you break up.
- ★ Use a buddy system and travel with friends between classes and after school.

- ★ Consider changing your locker and/or lock.
- ★ Consider changing your cell phone number or asking your cell phone provider to block certain numbers.
- ★ Change your email and computer passwords. Use blocking tools on your email and social network accounts and change your settings to 'private'. This will stop the person from sending you messages and will prevent that person from seeing your profile and status updates. Ask close friends to consider doing the same.
- ★ Avoid isolated areas and consider changing your route to and from school or work.
- ★ If you have a job, talk to your boss about concerns for your safety and ask to have someone walk you to your car or walk home with you.
- ★ Consider talking to the police about how to stop your ex from contacting you or frightening you. If your ex is harassing you, the police can explain legal options such as peace bonds or charges.
- ★ Involve your school. They can play an important part in any plan to keep you safe.
- ★ Keep spare change and memorize the number of someone who could help you at all times.
- ★ If your ex confronts you, try to move to a room with an exit. Avoid the kitchen or bathroom as these can be dangerous places if things get violent.
- ★ Keep a journal and describe the abuse and any unwanted contact from your ex and others who may try to give you messages.
- ★ Plan ahead. Think about what you would do or who you could talk to **before** you need help. Even if you never need to use the information, it might help you to help to a friend or family member who is in an unhealthy relationship.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911. Don't be embarrassed to call for help if you are afraid for your safety or the safety of others.

When you end an abusive relationship, it is not unusual to miss the person you have broken up with. That person was likely a big part of your life. Remind yourself that no amount of abuse is acceptable. You deserve a happy, respectful and safe relationship.

RESOURCES...

The Healing Journey: www.thehealingjourney.ca

Kids Help Phone: www.kidshelpphone.ca
or call **1-800-668-6868**

What's the Deal?: www.deal.org

Aboriginal Youth Network: www.ayn.ca

National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence:
www.nacafv.ca

Native Women's Association: www.nwac.ca

RespectED: www.redcross.ca/RespectED

CyberTip.ca: www.Cybertip.ca/app/en/respect_home

National Clearinghouse on Family Violence:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/chn-rccs/aboriginal-autochtones-eng.php

Consider contacting a transition house, mental health clinic, school counsellor or other services in your own region for more information on preventing or leaving abuse.

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There is NO EXCUSE for any kind of abuse!



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