



Fostering Healthy Relationships in Teens

A Conversation with Parents and Students
About Teen Dating Violence

Natick High School
April 2012



Voices Against Violence

Who We Are, What We Do

- We provide services for sexual assault and domestic violence victims/survivors (ages 12 and up) and their family.
- All services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.
- Services include: 24hr hotline, crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling and support groups, court advocacy, medical advocacy, outreach and education, school intervention/support, high risk team, shelter and supervised visitation.

Voices' 24 hour Hotlines: 508-626-8686 or 1-800-593-1125



What We Hope To Share

- What is Teen Dating Violence?
- What is a Healthy Relationship?
- What Help is Available?



Setting the Stage

- Your teen is probably already dating.
 - 89% of teens between the ages of 13 and 18 report they have been in a dating relationship, yet...
 - Only 25% of teens say that they have talked with their parents about dating violence.



Prevalence of Dating Violence

- Nationally, 10% of teens report being physically hurt on purpose by a dating partner in the past 12 months.
- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men who experience sexual or domestic violence in their lifetime report the first incident happened between the ages of 11 and 17.

Centers for Disease Control, 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey

2009 MA Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data

- Overall 11% of high school students reported being physically hurt by a date.
 - Female students were more likely than male students to report this experience (15% vs. 8%).
- Female students were more than likely than male students to experience sexual contact against their will (16% vs. 7%)
- 64% of Middle School students reported they had been on a date.
 - 8% reported that they had been physically hurt by a date.



Why Don't Teens Tell?

- They may be confused and not recognize the signs of abuse or may misinterpret the signs as “love”.
- They want to retain their independence.
- Fearful of their parent’s reaction.
- Enormous pressure from peers to be in a relationship.
 - Being in a relationship is THE most important thing.
- Fear, embarrassment, shame.



So What is Dating *Violence*?

- Dating violence/abuse is a pattern of behavior where one person exerts power and control over their partner.
- The violence/abuse can take many forms including physical, sexual, verbal, and/or emotional abusive or controlling behavior in a dating relationship.

Dating Violence Takes Many Forms...

- Physical
 - Hitting, pushing, grabbing
 - Slapping, punching
 - 'choking'
 - Reckless driving
- Emotional/Verbal
 - Name calling, cursing and yelling
 - Threats of harm to you or themselves
 - Isolation from friends and family
 - Turning your friends against you
- Sexual
 - Unwanted touching, coerced or forced sex
 - Refusing to use protection
 - Exposure to STI's
- Social Media/Online/Phone
 - **Sexting**
 - Posting rumors and hurtful things
 - Setting up fake FB pages
 - Using social media to track and stalk
 - Excessive texting; threats by text



Healthy.....Controlling.....*Violent/Abusive*



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- Before physical violence starts there is often a pattern of increasingly controlling and emotionally abusive behaviors.
 - Over time behavior may escalate to physical violence.

WHEN DOES
CARING
BECOME
CONTROLLING

So What Do Controlling Behaviors Look Like?

- Jealousy and Possessiveness
- Saying hurtful or embarrassing things in front of friends; posting things on social media
- Telling the other person what to do/wear/eat
- Checking someone's cell phone/computer to see who they've been talking to
- Name calling
- Excessive calling, emailing and/or texting; becoming angry if there's not an immediate response
- Using social media to track activity
- Trying to control who someone talks to and spends time with

These are serious warning signs.

Are you experiencing them?

Are you doing them?



OK, But What Does A Healthy Relationship Look Like?

- In a healthy relationship both people feel
 - Safe and Respected
 - Valued and Trusted
 - Secure and Confident
 - More, not Less
 - Really OK, even with all their faults
 - Honest, Responsible, and Accountable



In a Healthy Relationship You Have The Right To:

- Be heard and responded to respectfully.
- Have your own point of view, even if it is different than your boyfriend/girlfriend.
- Have your feelings and experiences acknowledged as real and valid.
- Be free from criticism and judgment.
- Be free from emotional and physical threats.
- Be free from angry outbursts and rage.
- To be respectfully asked, not ordered.

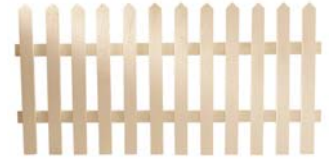
Sounds Great!

Where do I get one of those???

- It starts with YOU!
 - Knowing who you are
 - Getting clear about what you value
 - Surrounding yourself with people who value and respect the same things



Creating Healthy Boundaries



- Boundaries define you as an individual. They are the guidelines, rules and limits that you create to identify what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave around you.
- They determine how you will respond when someone steps outside those limits.
- They are statements of what you will or won't do, what you like and don't like, what's OK and not OK. They are your fence.



How To Create Your Boundaries

- Believe and know that you have a right to boundaries.
- Recognize that other people's needs and feelings are not more important than your own. You are important too!
- Learn to say no.
- Identify the actions and behaviors that you find unacceptable.
- **Trust and believe in yourself.**



Signs of Unhealthy Boundaries

- Going against your personal values or rights in order to please others.
- Giving as much as you can for the sake of giving.
- Taking as much as you can for the sake of taking.
- Expecting, even demanding that others fill your needs automatically.
- Feeling bad or guilty when you say no.
- Not speaking up when you are treated poorly.
- Falling apart so someone can take care of you.
- Falling "in love" with someone you barely know or who reaches out to you.
- Accepting touching and sex that you don't want.
- Touching a person without asking.



Warning Signs

- Have they begun to limit the amount of time they spend with other friends and/ or family?
- Are they afraid to miss phone calls/texts from their partner?
- Have they started to lose interest in activities outside of their relationship?



- Have their grades dropped?

- Has their general attitude or personality changed since they began their relationship?

- Do they have unexplained bruises or other injuries?

- Do they seem really anxious around you? (avoiding eye contact, hovering around as if they want to ask you something, etc.)



I Think My Teen is in an Unhealthy Relationship – What Do I Do?

- Start the conversation by saying how unhappy they seem to be around their partner.
- Listen and support. Try not to judge.
- Don't badmouth their partner, regardless of your feelings towards him/her.
 - It's OK to talk about behaviors you don't like, but character assassination will get you no where fast.



What To Do Continued....

- If your teen doesn't want to talk to you, offer to help them find another trusted adult to talk with (school counselor, clergy, local DV program).
- Get support for yourself.
- Know that breaking up can be dangerous.
 - Contact the police if you, your teen or friend feel threatened or scared.



What About SAFETY?

Ending an abusive relationship can be dangerous. Trust your gut – and theirs.

- Break-up should be final – no going back and forth, stop ALL contact.
- Block Facebook and other social media; check privacy setting; consider a “super-logoff”.
- Change cell number if necessary.
- Change your routine; change lockers or classes if necessary.
- Walk with friends, carpool, etc.



www.loveisrespect.org

www.loveisnotabuse.com

www.thatsnotcool.com

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Voices Against Violence Hotline
508-626-8686 or 1-800-593-1125