

# NAVIGATING YOUR TEEN DATING

## A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Dating can be a strange transition for teens....and their parents. Encourage your child to date people that make them feel happy and safe.

About 81% of parents believe that dating abuse is not a problem. However, we know that 1 in 3 teenagers will experience some form of dating abuse by time they graduate high school.

We all can play a role in ending dating violence!

Start by having conversations with your children about what happy, healthy relationships look like. Here are 6 tips on talking with your children:

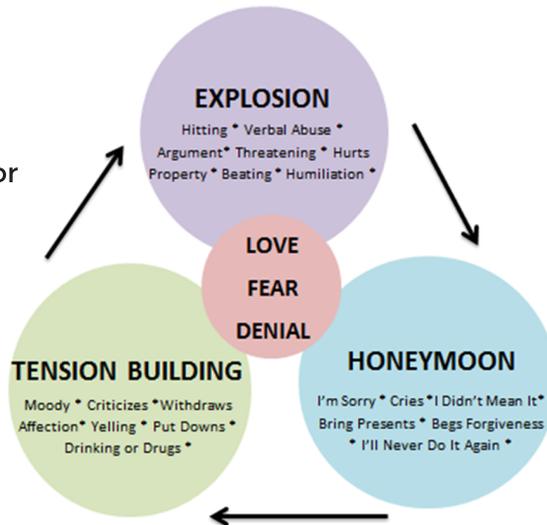
- **Encourage open, honest, and thoughtful reflection.** Talk openly with your children about healthy relationships.
  - **Understand the teen's experience.** From mood swings to risk taking, "normal teenage behavior" can appear anything-but-normal.
  - **Take a clear stand.** Make sure your children know how you feel about disrespect, use of inappropriate language, controlling behavior, and forms of violence.
- Make the most of "teachable moments".** Use TV shows, movies, music lyrics, news, or the experiences of friends to discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Discuss how to be an 'upstander'.** Teach your children how to stand-up for friends when they observe unhealthy behaviors.
- Don't wait!** Even if your child isn't dating now, it doesn't mean you should wait to have these conversations with them. Talking about healthy relationships should be ongoing and consistent throughout their childhood.

# WHAT IS TEEN DATING ABUSE?

A deliberate pattern of behaviors used to gain and maintain **power** and **control** in a familial or intimate partner relationship.

Domestic Abuse is a conscious choice! Abusers may use the following tactics to exert power and control over their victims:

Physical Violence  
Harmful Language  
Social Standing  
Technology  
Minimizing, Denying or Blaming  
Financial Control  
Intimidation  
Stalking  
Threats  
Exclusion or Isolation  
Manipulation  
Sexual Coercion  
Harassment, Assault



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you know or suspect your child is in an abusive relationship, the most important thing is to do something.

- **Take the situation seriously**
- Tell your child that you **believe and support them**
- Help your teen **develop a safety plan** to keep themselves safe from the partner's abuse
- **Respect your child's decisions** -- if you forbid them to see their partner, they may ultimately stay with them and hide it from you, putting them in greater danger
- **Encourage your child to seek professional help** or counseling
- **Take legal action** against the abusive partner if necessary

## WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS ?

Your child may be experiencing abuse in their relationship if they...

- have a dating partner who is intensely jealous or possessive
- are always defending or making excuses for their partner's behaviors
- mention violent behaviors but laughs it off as a joke
- receive frequent calls/ texts from partner
- become visibly upset after calls or dates with their partner
- lose interests in things they normally enjoy
- start to spend less time with friends/ family
- have unexplained injuries/ bruises

For more tips on talking with your children about healthy relationships visit:

Love is Respect at  
[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

Break the Cycle at  
[www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)  
or text "loveis" to 22522

For more information on teen dating abuse, please contact:  
Lydia Lynes at [llynnes@laurel-house.org](mailto:llynnes@laurel-house.org) or (610) 277-1860 ext. 121

24/7 Confidential Hotline: 1 (800) 642-3150  
Visit Us at [www.laurel-house.org](http://www.laurel-house.org)