

STEPS TO SAFETY

Dating Violence

Teens learn how to behave in relationships from peers, adults in their lives, and the media. Teens often receive messages that suggest violence in a relationship is normal. However, violence in a dating relationship is never acceptable. Dating violence is related to certain risk factors.

Risks of having unhealthy relationships increase for teens who:

- ✈ Believe that dating violence is acceptable
- ✈ Are depressed, anxious, or have other symptoms of trauma
- ✈ Display aggressive behaviors toward peers
- ✈ Use drugs or other illegal substances
- ✈ Engage in early sexual activity and have multiple sexual partners
- ✈ Have a friend involved in dating violence
- ✈ Have conflicts with a partner
- ✈ Witness or experience violence in the home

Teens who communicate effectively with their partner in a dating relationship, manage emotions like anger and jealousy, and treat others with respect are more likely to have relationships that are healthy and nonviolent. Teens who feel as though they can turn to their parents in times of need are more likely to disclose that they are in an unsafe dating situation and get the help they need to remove themselves from that situation.

Steps to Protecting Your Teen from Dating Violence

Step 1
✈ Explain to your teen that young adults experience the same types of abuse as adults, and reinforce that this abuse is NEVER acceptable.

Step 2
✈ Help your teen to learn about the various forms of abuse that may occur in a dating relationship:
Physical – Any intentional use of physical force with the intent to cause fear or injury, including hitting, shoving, biting, strangling, kicking, or using a weapon.

Verbal or Emotional – Non-physical behaviors such as threats, insults, constant monitoring, humiliation, intimidation, isolation, or stalking.

Sexual – Any action that impacts a person's ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs.

Cyber – Use of the Internet and any technology, including social media, to intimidate, harass, or threaten a current or former dating partner. Examples include demanding passwords, checking cell phones, cyber-bullying, distributing inappropriate pictures, sexting, excessive or threatening texts, or stalking on social media.

 **Step 3**

Promote healthy relationships. During the preteen and teen years, your teen is learning skills they need to form positive relationships with others. Healthy dating relationships early on can prevent patterns of dating violence and domestic violence that can last into adulthood.

 **Step 4**

Don't miss signs that your teen may be in a violent relationship. Monitor your teen's behavior and intervene if you see behaviors in their partner that could indicate that your teen is at risk. Involve law enforcement and notify school officials when necessary to keep your teen safe.

