

Understanding Adolescent Dating Violence:

A Guide for Families & Practitioners

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Overview

Adolescence offers a window of opportunity for youth to learn the skills necessary for building healthy relationships. As their social contexts change, parents and other trusted adults can help adolescents develop these skills and support them as they navigate new relationships (1).

Although adolescence holds promise for healthy friendships and romantic relationships, it also presents risks, including dating violence. Parents and trusted adults have the potential to recognize warning signs of dating violence and intervene early, create protective physical and social environments, and teach youth about developing safe and healthy relationships (1).

This compilation of resources offers parents and practitioners several evidence-based strategies for engaging with adolescents to prevent and respond to dating violence. Two resources for parents are provided in Spanish.



Learn the Facts

What is adolescent dating violence?

Adolescent dating violence includes **physical violence**, **sexual violence**, **psychological aggression**, and **stalking** by a dating partner (1).

Can occur **in person** & **electronically** (such as repeated unwanted/aggressive **texting**, or by **posting sexually explicit images** without consent) (1).

What are some warning signs of dating violence?

A teen may be experiencing **dating violence** if they:

- Spend less time with family & friends
- Need to excessively text, call, email, or see their dating partner
- Give up things that used to be important
- Start getting worse grades or missing school
- Get pressured by a dating partner about what to do, where to go, or what to wear
- Worry often about upsetting their dating partner
- Apologize or make excuses for their dating partner's behavior
- Have injuries they try to cover up or can't explain (2)

How many adolescents experience dating violence?

1 in 5 female-identifying adolescents and **1 in 10** male-identifying adolescents in the U.S. report **physical and/or sexual dating violence** (3,4).

41% of adolescents report that a dating partner has **intentionally emotionally harmed** them or **exerted control** over them (5).

Half of female-identifying and **one-quarter** of male-identifying youth also report **electronic forms of victimization** (6).

How does dating violence affect teens?

Experiencing dating violence in adolescence **increases the risk of serious consequences**, including:

- depression & suicidal ideation
- sexual risk behaviors & STIs
- eating disorders
- poor academic performance
- substance abuse
- low self-esteem
- serious physical injury
- revictimization through adulthood (4, 7, 8)

What can parents & trusted adults do to help?

Start the conversation about relationships early.

- Youth report preferring to seek help for dating violence from older siblings, parents, and friends instead of going to formal resources, but only one in three report actually talking to their parents about it (9).
- Feeling able to talk to parents about problems decreases the likelihood of experiencing youth violence (10).

Build strong, supportive connections with the adolescents in your life.

- Adolescent connectedness to family/other supportive adults and sharing activities with them serve as a buffer against adolescent dating violence (10).
- Parental/family modeling of positive coping strategies also protects against violence (10).
- Parental warmth and support reduce the risk of negative consequences associated with dating violence, including sexual risk behaviors, suicidal thoughts, depression, alcohol and drug use, and poor academic performance (9).

Stay informed of your adolescents' whereabouts & activities, including online spaces.

- Higher parental monitoring reduces the likelihood of physical and sexual dating violence (9).
- Youth who report having respectful rules and monitoring imposed by their parents are less likely to hold attitudes that condone controlling dating behaviors (9).



Parent & Family Resources

01 10 Questions to Start the Conversation

Description:

This parent handbook was developed by Break the Cycle, a nonprofit organization that supports young people to build healthy relationships and create a culture without abuse. It provides suggestions for creating a safe climate to have conversations with teenagers about dating relationships and describes 10 questions that parents can use to guide discussions about dating violence.

Link:

https://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/hanbook_-_parents_of_teen_0.pdf

02 Start Relating Before They Start Dating

Description:

This webpage is from the nonprofit organization Futures without Violence, which seeks to end violence against women and children through groundbreaking programs, policies, and campaigns. The page includes links to several helpful conversation guides, fact sheets about the warning signs of teen dating violence, and interactive quizzes.

Link:

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/talk-teens-teen-dating-violence/>

03 That's Not Cool Initiative

Description:

Futures without Violence developed an award-winning, national public education initiative called That's Not Cool, which is dedicated to decreasing teen dating violence due to technology and increasing awareness for healthy teen relationships online. That's Not Cool has an interactive website, social media tools, apps, games, and other resources to help young people and adult allies learn to recognize and prevent teen dating violence.

Link:

<https://thatsnotcool.com/>

Recursos para hispanohablantes

01 El Amor Es Respeto: Sitio web en español

Descripción:

Este sitio web es un recurso nacional para prevenir la violencia de pareja mediante el empoderamiento de los jóvenes. El sitio web provee varios recursos para entender el problema de la violencia en las relaciones íntimas de jóvenes, conversar con sus hijos sobre este tipo de violencia, y conseguir apoyo y ayuda profesional.

Enlace:

<https://espanol.loveisrespect.org/>

02 Realidades de la Violencia en las Relaciones Íntimas de Parejas entre Jóvenes Latin@s

Descripción:

Este recurso es de la Red Nacional Latina por Familias y Comunidades Saludables, un proyecto de la Casa de Esperanza que trabaja contra la violencia doméstica en las comunidades latinas. Esta infografía describe algunos factores protectores contra la violencia en las relaciones íntimas que son pertinentes a los jóvenes latin@s.

Enlace:

<https://nationallatinonetwork.org/images/TDV-factsheet-Spanish-2018.png>

Practitioner Resources

01 Break the Cycle: Build Capacity

Description:

In addition to providing resources for youth and parents, the nonprofit organization Break the Cycle offers technical assistance and training resources to build individual, organizational and community capacity to prevent and respond to teen dating abuse. In addition to their evidence-based training, Break the Cycle also provides several guides to developing programs and policies across multiple settings (e.g., schools and rural communities) to create youth-informed and youth-centered prevention and help services.

Link:

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/training-and-technical-assistance>

02 Dating Matters: Understanding Teen Dating Violence Prevention

Description:

In order to address adolescent dating violence, the CDC has developed a comprehensive evidence-based teen dating violence prevention model that includes prevention strategies for individuals, peers, families, schools, and neighborhoods. Dating Matters offers a free, online course available to educators, school personnel, youth mentors, and others dedicated to improving teen health. This course helps practitioners understand the risk factors and warning signs of teen dating violence, as well as their role in promoting healthy relationships.

Link:

<https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/datingmatters/>

03 Hanging Out or Hooking Up: Clinical Guidelines on Responding to Adolescent Relationship Abuse

Description:

This set of guidelines was developed by Futures without Violence to be used by healthcare providers in order to help them prevent, recognize, and address adolescent dating violence. The recommendations can be implemented in a variety of settings, including in clinical practice and school-based care. This resource describes the complex factors influencing adolescent dating violence, outlines strategies to help adolescents develop healthy relationships, and details how to establish connections with violence prevention advocates and community programs.

Link:

<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/Adolescent%20Health%20Guide.pdf>

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