



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

# TEEN DATING ABUSE

What teens need to know if you are experiencing harm, causing harm, or want to help a friend

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# WHAT IS TEEN DATING ABUSE?

A pattern of controlling, abusive, or aggressive behavior towards a current or former dating partner, either in person or using social media or texting. Abuse doesn't always have to be physical. There is also emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and sexual abuse.

**1** IN **3**

**teens experience some form of dating abuse. Teens experiencing online abuse are also likely to be experiencing offline abuse.**





# WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF TEEN DATING ABUSE?



We all mess up sometimes and can say or do things we don't mean when we are angry or upset. But if someone is doing things that make their partner feel uncomfortable on a regular basis, or is afraid to make their partner mad, it could be abuse.

## SOME ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP BEHAVIORS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Telling a partner who they can or cannot hang out with or follow on Twitter or social media
- Sending mean text messages criticizing your partner's appearance
- Looking through messages on a partner's phone without permission
- Blaming a partner for their bad behavior and making it seem like the other person's fault
- Pressuring for nude photos
- Getting mad at your partner if they don't respond to texts within a few minutes.



# IS IT JUST JEALOUSY?

We are often told that if someone is jealous, it means they really love their partner. We see this all the time on TV shows! And we all feel jealous from time to time. But when someone is jealous a lot of the time and uses jealousy to explain their controlling behaviors, this might be abuse.

## Who is at risk?

Teen dating abuse is a pattern of behavior, not something that happens once. Often abuse will get worse over time. Abuse is never the victim's fault, and there is nothing the victim can do to make their partner stop being abusive. Abuse happens to people of all genders and identities. Girls, people of color, and LGBTQ teens are more likely to experience abuse because abuse is about power. Those who are given more power in society can use abuse to try and keep their power.

## Can abusive relationships get better?

Abusive relationships can have some good times too, but the abuse is likely to return. People who abuse their partners aren't bad people, but they need to learn a different way to treat their partners and that can take a lot of effort. There are resources to help people experiencing harm, and for those who are causing harm to others.





# Want to talk to an adult about dating abuse?

Most adults in positions of authority are something called a "**mandated reporter**." A mandated reporter is someone who is **required** by law to **report** reasonable suspicions of abuse against people under the age of 18. Any adult who works at a school, teachers, counselors, social workers, and coaches are mandated reporters. These people can be great sources of support and you should talk to adults you trust about abuse if you would like to, but know that they will have to tell others if they learn that you or someone else is being physically or sexually harmed or if you might be a danger to someone else. Feel free to ask adults if they are mandated reporters before disclosing abuse.

There are other **confidential** options like anonymous phone lines (see the last page of this guide) who do not have to report your information to others.



# How can I talk to a friend about abuse?

Start a conversation with your friend who is experiencing abuse, and be prepared that their first response might be to shut down. Your friend needs to be ready to talk, and it might not happen the first time. On average, it takes a person leaving an abusive partner seven times before they leave a relationship for good. So don't be discouraged if they go back to their partner after abuse.





# SOME DO'S AND DON'T'S

## DO...

- Believe your friend
- Start a conversation
- Listen
- Be supportive
- Express concern for their safety
- Keep it low key
- Tell them you're here to talk anytime
- Focus on how your friend feels
- Encourage them to seek out support
- Keep their privacy and confidentiality
- Support any choice they want to make

## DON'T...

- Question your friend
- Wait for them to come to you
- Try to fix the problem
- Make it about you and your life
- Tell them what they should do
- Pressure someone to talk
- Speak negatively about the partner
- Focus on the abuse
- Try and solve the issue by yourself
- Go and talk to their partner
- Judge them for their choices

## Phrases to say...

- "I am sorry this is happening to you"
- "Here are the resources when you are ready"
- "I am worried about you"
- "This isn't your fault"

## Phrases not to say...

- "You should..."
- "You shouldn't..."
- "You have to do something/tell someone..."
- "Maybe if you...this wouldn't happen."



# RESOURCES

National Resource with  
Confidential Chat and  
Phone Line options:

Love is Respect,  
<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

## Arizona Local Resources:

- A New Leaf (Mesa, AZ): If you are in need of housing:  
<https://www.turnanewleaf.org/>
- Arizona Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative (Northern AZ):  
<https://nau.edu/family-violence-institute/welcome-acasi/>
- BLOOM365 (Maricopa County, AZ), <https://www.bloom365.org/>
- Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC) Advocate Program (Phoenix, AZ),  
<https://www.cplc.org/hhs/behavioral-health.php>
- Kaity's Way (Maricopa County, AZ), <https://kaitysway.org/>
- One n ten for LGBTQ youth-focused services based in Phoenix with  
programs, events, and satellite centers throughout  
Arizona, <https://onenten.org/>
- 2-1-1 Arizona for a comprehensive list of  
services, <https://211arizona.org/Arizona> Coalition to End Sexual and  
Domestic Violence (ACESDV) for a list of national and statewide  
services, [acesdv.org](https://acesdv.org)

**Create a plan to help you or your friend  
be safer** (this doesn't prevent abuse!):

Love is Respect,  
<https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/Teen-Safety-Plan.pdf>

