

Teen Dating Violence Awareness

Creating Awareness, Encouraging Safety, and Promoting Respect

While many adults assume relationship abuse is an issue that only affects older teens or adults, dating violence can occur in middle school and high school relationships and often goes unnoticed. Educators are uniquely positioned to recognize warning signs, provide support, and help create a school culture that promotes respect, safety, and healthy relationships.



Warning Signs

While no single behavior confirms that a student is experiencing dating violence, educators may observe patterns such as:

- Sudden changes in behavior
- Increased absences
- Isolation from friends
- Excessive communication from a partner
- Unexplained injuries or excuses
- Emotional distress

What is Teen Dating Violence?

Teen dating violence is a pattern of behaviors used by one person to gain power and control over another in a dating relationship.

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- **Physical abuse** such as hitting, pushing, or restraining
- **Emotional abuse** including insults, humiliation, intimidation, or manipulation
- **Verbal abuse** such as threats or constant criticism
- **Digital abuse** through excessive monitoring, harassment, or controlling behavior via text messages, social media, or apps
- **Sexual abuse** involving pressure, coercion, or unwanted sexual contact

How Educators Can Help

Many students experiencing relationship abuse do not immediately seek help. Educators can make a difference by creating a safe environment where students feel supported.

1. Listen without judgment.

If a student chooses to share concerns, focus on listening rather than immediately offering solutions. Avoid blaming questions and instead communicate empathy and concern.

Consider statements such as:

- "Thank you for sharing this with me."
- "You do not deserve to be treated that way."
- "I'm glad you told someone."
- "Let's talk about resources that can help."

2. Know your school's procedures.

Educators need to be familiar with district policies, reporting procedures, and available support services. School counselors, social workers, psychologists, and administrators can help coordinate appropriate interventions and resources.

3. Promote healthy relationship skills.

Teaching relationship skills doesn't have to be limited to health classes. Discussions about communication, respect, boundaries, consent, empathy, and conflict resolution can be incorporated into many educational settings.

4. Model respectful relationships.

Students learn from what they observe. Positive interactions among staff members help reinforce healthy communication and problem-solving skills.

By fostering open communication, promoting healthy relationship skills, and connecting students with support, schools can play a critical role in helping young people build safer, more respectful relationships.



Try This!

Healthy Relationship Reflection Activity

Ask students to anonymously list three qualities they believe are important in a healthy friendship or relationship. Collect responses and discuss common themes such as:

- Trust
- Respect
- Honesty
- Kindness
- Communication
- Support

This simple activity encourages students to think critically about relationship expectations while reinforcing positive behaviors.

Additional Resources

To view the resources used for this guide and more information, click on the links below.

https://www.loveisrespect.org_

<https://www.breakthecycle.org/>

