

Love is Not Abuse

Teens in Violent Relationships
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December 7, 2004

The Facts

- ◆ 1 in 5 high school females report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner (JAMA, 2001)
- ◆ 12% of high school students have been forced to have sexual intercourse (YRBS, 2003)
- ◆ 80% of rapes are committed by acquaintances.

The Aftermath

- ◆ Girls who experience abuse are at a greater risk for:
 - Alcohol, tobacco and cocaine use
 - Unhealthy weight control
 - Sexual Health Risk Behavior
 - Pregnancy
 - Seriously consider or attempt suicide

Pregnant Teens

- ◆ Pregnant Teens are at an increased risk for abuse. A study in Chicago found that:
 - 55% of teen moms receiving TANF had experienced some level of violence from their boyfriends during the past 12 months.
 - 51% reported birth control sabotage.
 - 21% reported work or school related sabotage.

Pregnancy and Sexual Assault

- ◆ 75% of children born to high school girls are fathered by men older than high school age, the majority are older than 20. (1993)
- ◆ Approximately 15% of pregnant teenagers became pregnant as a direct result of rape. (1992)

Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships

- ◆ As pre-teens and teens enter the world of complex and intimate relationships, it is important to help them determine the difference between a healthy versus unhealthy relationship. Studies have shown that aspects of relationship violence can appear long before anyone is married or even “dating.”

A Healthy Relationship

- ♦ A healthy relationship has open and honest communication and an even playing field on which partners share power and control over decisions.

An Unhealthy Relationship

- ♦ An unhealthy relationship has an imbalance in which one partner tries to exercise control and power over the other through threats, emotional abuse and physical abuse. It can include name-calling, withholding money, threats to isolate a person from friends and family, coercion, violent acts, stalking and significant physical injury.

Characteristics of Teen Relationships

- ♦ Peer Approval
 - To have a dating partner, especially if he or she is "cool"
 - Must be dating someone to fit in
- ♦ Gender Role Expectations
 - Status depends on attachment to a person with high status.
 - Female socialization to take sole responsibility for the relationship.
- ♦ Lack of Experience
 - Misunderstandings about appropriate behavior in an intimate relationship.
 - Excessive jealousy and possessiveness by the abuser can be idealized as proof of love.
 - Teen relationships are shorter, but are experienced as intensely as long-term adult relationships.

Characteristics of Teen Relationships

- ◆ Same Sex Relationships
 - Coming out issues may make it more difficult for an LGBT teen to disclose abuse.
 - LGBT teens have increased barriers such as homophobia, absence of role models, etc.
- ◆ Sexual Abuse
 - Victims of dating violence also describe continuous forms of “sexual slavery.”
 - Often happens between teen girls and adult men.
- ◆ Culture and Race
 - Teens from cultures that disapprove of dating may be desperate for help but may refuse to seek assistance from family members out of fear of reprisal.
 - Young women may be unwilling to discuss an abusive relationship with others outside of their culture.
 - May believe future opportunities are limited due to racism.

Characteristics of Teen Relationships

- ◆ Little Contact with Adult Resources
 - Feel that adults will not take them seriously.
 - Telling an adult may result in loss of independence and trust.
- ◆ Less Access to Resources
 - Less access to health care, shelter space and other domestic and sexual violence programs.
- ◆ Legal Issues
 - Legal options may be different and may involve parents or guardians.
- ◆ Pregnancy
 - May be forced to have sex, or the abuser may refuse to use or sabotage birth control.
 - This is very common in relationships where teen girls are dating adult men.

Characteristics of Teen Relationships

- ◆ Same Sex Couples
 - Coming out issues for LGBT teens may make it more difficult to disclose abuse.
 - LGBT teens have increased barriers such as homophobia, absence of role models, etc.
- ◆ Sexual Abuse
 - Victims of dating violence also describe continuous forms of sexual slavery.
 - Often in relationships with teen girls and adult men.
- ◆ Culture and Race
 - Teens from cultures that disapprove of dating and sexuality may be desperate for help but may refuse to seek assistance out of fear of reprisal or shame.
 - Young women may be unwilling to discuss an abusive relationship with others outside of their race.
 - May believe future opportunities are limited due to racism.

Characteristics of Teen Relationships

- ◆ Substance Abuse
 - Substance abuse and dating violence often occur together.
 - Some abusers become more violent when they are using.
 - For victims, alcohol and drugs may act as a substitute for positive, effective coping strategies.

Warning Signs

- ◆ Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship
 - When they are together, s/he calls her/him names or puts him/her down in front of other people.
 - Acts extremely jealous when partner talks to other boys/girls, even when it's innocent.
 - Apologizes for partner's behavior and makes excuses for him/her.
 - Frequently cancels plans at the last minute.
 - Forces partner to give up things that used to be important (friends, family, activities).

Warning Signs

- ◆ Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship
 - Partner is always checking up, calling or paging on the other.
 - Partner demands to know where s/he has been and who s/he has been with.
 - One partner seems very worried about upsetting the other partner.
 - Weight, appearance or grades have changed dramatically.
 - Has injuries s/he can't explain or explanations don't make sense.

Safety Planning

- ◆ Teens in relationships often attend the same school, raising safety issues and adding to the difficulty of ending the relationship. It can complicate enforcement of orders of protection/civil no contact orders. The abuser's friends may continue the harassment even if the abuser is transferred to another school. Confidentiality may also be harder to maintain for teen victims/survivors.

Safety Planning

- ◆ Questions to ask?
 - What kinds of cues have there been in the past.
 - What have you done in the past to protect yourself? What has worked?
 - Where can you turn for help? (parents, teacher, neighbor, friend)
 - If you needed to leave your home, where would you go?
 - If you needed money in an emergency, where could you get it?

Safety Planning

- ◆ Questions to Ask?
 - Do you know where to get medical attention? How would you get there? Do you have insurance?
 - How do you feel about calling the police or getting an order of protection? How would your partner react?
 - How dangerous is the batterer? Has s/he threatened to kill you, your family, pets or self? Does the abuser have access to a gun? Does s/he have a criminal record or has engaged in criminal activity.

Believe the Victim

- ◆ **Belief**

- It is important for you to believe the victim of dating violence. Let others investigate the crime. You need to offer support and belief. It is not the victim's fault. Rape and abuse are the fault of the offender. Help the victim contact local crisis centers.

Order of Protection

- ◆ An order of protection is a court document which orders an abuser to do or not do certain things. An emergency order of protection can be obtained without the abuser knowing. Access to orders of protection for teens may vary by county. If you are interested in this option contact your local domestic violence program for more information.

Civil No Contact Order

- ◆ Many victims of sexual assault do not report the crime and do not want to prosecute; rather, the victim merely desires that the assailant stay away from her/him. Any person who is the victim of non consensual sexual conduct or sexual penetration, or a person on behalf of a minor victim of non consensual sexual contact or penetration, may seek a Civil No Contact Order. A Petitioner may seek a Civil No Contact Order in Circuit Court. Emergency orders may be obtained. Contact your local rape crisis center for more information.

Resources

- ♦ Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence,
www.ilcadv
- ♦ Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault,
www.icasa.org
- ♦ Will County Children's Advocacy Center 815 727
0710
- ♦ Women's Law Initiative,
www.womenslaw.org/teens

Contact Information

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