

Dating Violence Fact Sheet



Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the US is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner.¹

Let's face it – our teens and preteens are dating. But for many of them, the relationships they're in can be unhealthy and even harmful. Every day, our youth are attempting to navigate their relationships, sometimes with little guidance or poor examples. As adults – and especially fathers – it's imperative we start talking to our kids about healthy relationships, in addition to role modeling those healthy relationships ourselves.

The information below will illustrate the seriousness of dating violence and the important role fathers and other male influencers play in the lives of youth. For tips on how to have a conversation with your youth about healthy relationships, see our Conversation Starters.

The Issue of Teen Dating Violence:

- 1 in 3 teens report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped or physically hurt by a partner.²
- 1 in 4 teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cell phones and texting.³
- 45% of girls in an online study said they know a friend or peer who has been pressured into having either intercourse or oral sex.⁴
- Teens in same-sex relationships experience rates of violence and abuse similar to rates experienced by teens in heterosexual relationships.⁵

How Teen Dating Violence Affects our Youth:

- Teen victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide.⁶
- Youth who perpetrate dating violence are significantly more likely to engage in cyber bullying compared to peers who do not perpetrate dating violence.⁷
- Having been a victim of physical dating violence was significantly associated with lower than average grades and poor school attachment for male and female students in grades 7 through 12.⁸
- Boys who perpetrated teen dating violence were three times more likely to be involved in neighborhood violence.⁹

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How Teen Dating Violence Affects our Youth: *continued*

- Adolescent girls in physically abusive relationships were 3.5 times more likely to become pregnant than non-abused girls.¹⁰
- Victims and perpetrators are more likely to carry weapons, as well as engage in physical fighting,¹¹ and other high risk behaviors, such as gambling.¹²
- A third (32%) of female homicides among adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 are committed by an intimate partner.¹³

The Importance of Role Modeling Healthy Relationships:

- A national survey of youth found that more than half of dating violence victims and statutory rape/sexual misconduct victims had witnessed intimate partner violence.¹⁴
- A survey of boys and girls in the 6th, 9th, and 12th grades who reported childhood exposure to violence found that this violence was associated with an increased risk of perpetrating dating violence like threats of harm, physically or sexually hurting someone they are going out with.¹⁵
- 78% of intimate partner violence incidents involved male perpetrators, most commonly fathers.¹⁶

Talking to Our Kids Really Works:

- Findings from a series of focus groups with African American adolescents and young adults (ages 13-24), indicated that youth preferred seeking help for dating violence from older siblings, parents, and friends as opposed to formal resources.¹⁷
- Greater parental warmth and parental knowledge about what their teens were doing reduces the odds of sexual risk behaviors including alcohol and drug use during sex and pregnancy.¹⁸
- Parental monitoring reduced the likelihood of 6th grade boys perpetrating physical dating aggression.¹⁹
- Of teens in an abusive relationship, fewer than 1 in 3 confide in their parents about their abusive relationship.²⁰
- In a national on-line survey of parents with children 11-18 years old, nearly half had not discussed dating violence with their children in the past year. Reasons why included they thought their children were too young to talk about it, they would not know what to say, and their children would learn about it through experience.²¹
- Research consistently suggests that the key environmental support for resilience in childhood is connections to competent and caring adults in the family and community.²²

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