

2026

Teen Dating Abuse Awareness

Morris County Library
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Presented by:
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Learning Objectives

- To discuss dating abuse including the definitions, dynamics and prevalence
- To explore factors and dynamics specific to dating abuse
- To learn how to identify potential warning signs of abuse and what can parents do

MYTH

OR

FACT

Myth or Fact: Only girls are the victims of dating abuse

- Any gender can be the victim of abuse.
- It happens in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

MYTH



Myth or Fact: Dating Abuse is an anger management issue

- Dating violence looks like anger.
- The majority of people using abuse in their relationships only do so with their partner or family.
- Anger management and domestic violence/dating abuse are separate problems requiring separate treatment.

MYTH



Myth or Fact:

The most dangerous time for a victim is when they leave

- A victim of dating abuse is at a much higher risk of being seriously harmed or murdered when they try to leave the relationship

FACT



Myth or Fact:

An individual becomes a victim because he/she has low self-esteem

MYTH



- **ANYONE** can become a victim in an abusive relationship.
- It may be difficult to maintain high self-esteem while navigating an abusive relationship.

Myth or Fact:

This would not happen in my child's school

MYTH

- No School is “safe” enough
- No Neighborhood is “good” enough
- Dating abuse and domestic violence happen everywhere



Myth or Fact:

The best solutions is to just tell them to break up

MYTH



- Remember the most dangerous time is during a break-up
- Teens do not always do what we say
- Pushing the teen to hide the relationship

What is Dating Abuse



- Dating abuse is a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviors
- May include physical, sexual, verbal, emotional abuse
- The motivating factor behind the abuse is to gain power and control over their partner
- Impacts all populations

Factors that impact young people differently than adults

Developmental
task of
separating
from parent

Goals of
independence
and self-
reliance

Feelings and
influences
around
sexuality and
relationships

Peer attitudes
and values

Prevalence

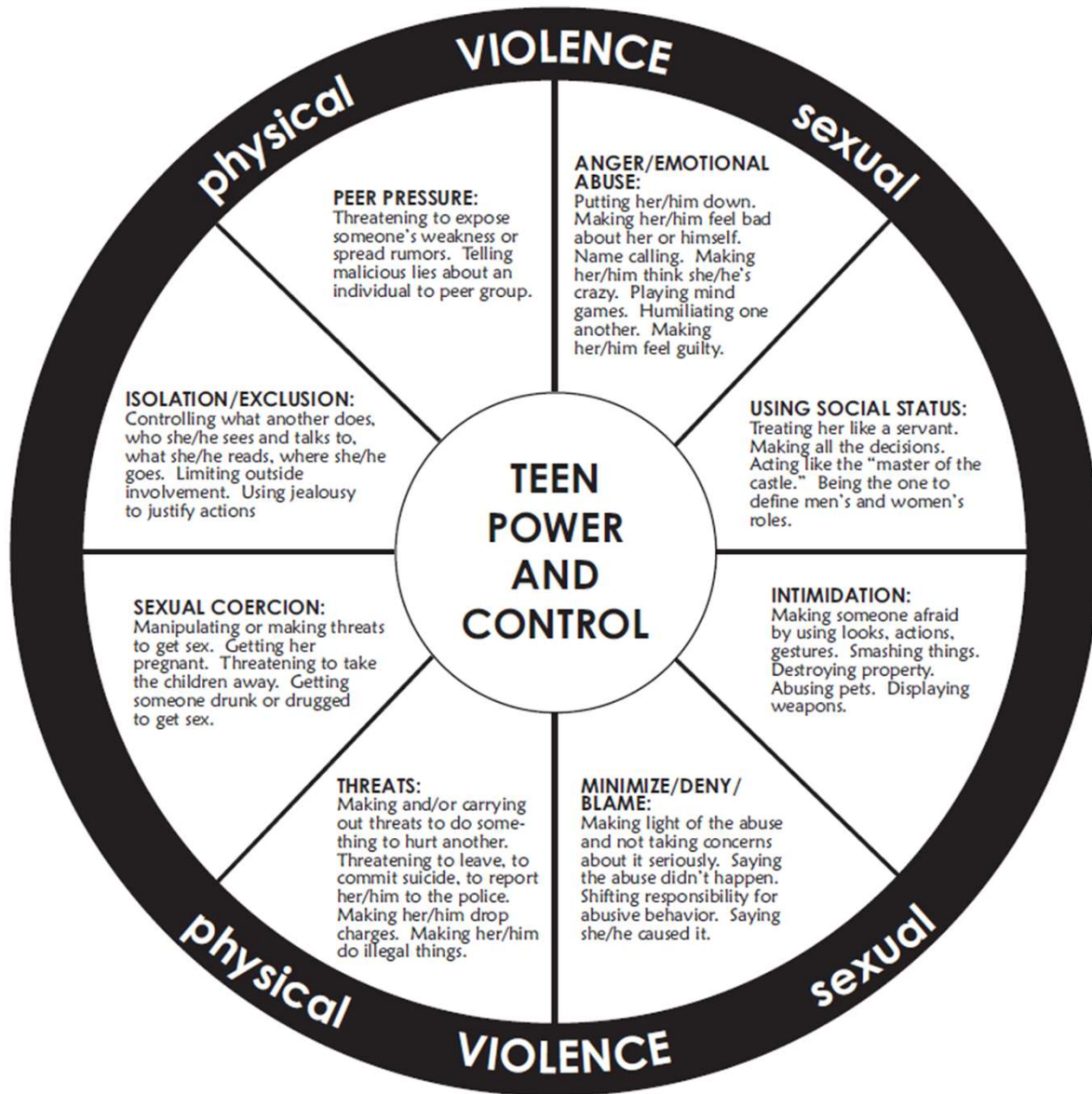
1 in 3
Teenagers will
experience
physical, sexual,
or
emotional abuse
from someone
they're in a
relationship with
before becoming
adults

1 in 11
Female teens
1 in 15
Male teens
Report
experiencing
physical dating
violence in the
last year

Females ages
16-24
have the highest
rate of
experiencing
interpersonal
violence

Lack of awareness

- Only 33% of teens who were in an abusive relationship ever told anyone about the abuse
- 81% of parents admit that they do not think dating violence is an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue
- A majority of parents (81%) felt they could identify if their child was experiencing dating abuse, but a majority of parents (58%) could not identify all the warning signs of abuse



Teens & Tech Abuse

- 20-30% of teens (who had been in relationships) said their partner had constantly checked in on them, harassed or insulted them, or had made unwanted requests for sexual activity, all via cell phones
- 1 in 4 teens report hourly contact with dating partner between midnight and 5am
- Sometimes 30 times or more per hour
- Location sharing as means of control



Impact of abuse on teens

- Higher risk of substance abuse, risky behavior, eating disorders, and future abusive relationships
- Being physically or sexually abused makes teen girls 6x more likely to get pregnant and 2x as likely to get an STI
- Half of youth who have been victims of both dating violence and rape attempt suicide, compared to 12.5% of non-abused girls and 5.4% of non-abused boys

Barriers to Leaving or Breaking Up



- FEAR
- Genuine love/hope partner will change
- Peer pressure
- Isolation from friends and other supportive people
- For LGBTQI+ youth, fear of being “outed”
- Lack of knowledge or awareness

Warning Signs of Being Abused

- Reports spending too much time with partner
- Stops seeing friends
- Stops participating in activities
- Needs partner's permission
- Tech control
- Makes excuses for partner's behavior
- Appears fearful of making partner angry
- Changes in clothing/appearance
- Appears sad, depressed, anxious, suicidal

Warning Signs of Using Abusive Behaviors

- Strict adherence to gender stereotypes
- Extreme jealousy
- Possessiveness
- Extreme mood swings
- Blaming/inability to take responsibility for own behavior
- Controlling attitude
- “Too much, too soon”
- Has witnessed abuse at home
- History of bullying

Parent Interventions

- No single “recipe”. You know your child
- Make observations, express concern; **don't** judge or criticize
- **LISTEN**
- Consider **restrictions** on contact, **don't** force to break it off or cease contact
- Discuss safety concerns

Parent Tips

- Remain calm
- Don't blame
- Don't minimize the relationship
- Don't tell the teen what to do, help them make decisions by listening and giving information
- Discuss resources
- Let your child know they are loved and supported

Starting Conversations About Abuse with Your Child

- Listen and Give Support
- Accept what your child is telling you
- Show concern
- Talk about the behaviors, not the person
- Avoid ultimatums
- Be prepared
- Decide on next steps together



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Teen Dating Abuse Prevention Program:

No2DatingAbuse.org or 973-267-7520 Ext. 136

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UNSILENCED

REAL CONVERSATIONS
ABOUT ABUSE

