

Understanding and Preventing Dating Violence

Teens learn to navigate the process of expressing romantic interest and how to respond to others. Today, much of adolescent dating unfolds in the technology sphere and through social media. This has made dating more complex and has also introduced new forms of abuse.

To help support teens in developing healthy dating relationships, whether you are a parent, a teacher, a coach, an aunt or a neighbour, we all need to know:

1. What is teen dating violence?
2. How can we prevent it?
3. What can educators do?

Teen dating violence takes many forms and can include physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. It can lead to physical and emotional impacts, long term negative consequences, and challenges in adult relationships.

On average, studies report 10% of teens experience dating violence

MYTHS

- Teen dating relationships are typically too short for violence to be a problem
- Teen dating violence is only serious if it is physical
- Adults and peers know when a relationship is violent
- Youth who are experiencing violence know how to get help
- Dating violence only occurs in certain types of relationships

FACTS

- Teen dating violence occurs in all demographics and types of relationships - even short lived ones.
- Research demonstrates psychological and cyber abuse can have harmful and lasting effects, even without physical violence.
- Peers are more likely than adults to know. People who use violence can be good at presenting a different image to others
- There are barriers to help, and even youth who seem organized in other aspects of their life might be prevented from speaking up.

School-based programs can reduce teen dating violence by 75%

Strategies & Take Aways

Learning to be in intimate relationships is complicated business. There are effective curriculum-based approaches to preventing TDV and these programs can reduce teen dating violence by 75%. But, not all programs are equally effective.

Effective Programs

- Explicitly teach skills
- Offer opportunity for practice
- Have sufficient duration to learn and practice
- Are implemented by educators with training and support

Effective Programs Explicitly Teach

- Difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships
- Communication skills
- Help-seeking skills
- Have sufficient duration to learn and practice
- Are implemented by educators with training and support

What You Can Do: Strategies for Educators

1. Educate yourself
2. Listen more than you talk
3. Watch your assumptions
4. Teach and respect student's rights to consent
5. Look at media for opportunities to start important conversation



Additional Resources

The Fourth R: www.youthrelationships.org

Promoting healthy youth relationships by building the capacity of schools and communities through innovative programming, research, education and consultation.

- Strategies for Health Youth Relationships (Grade 7-9 Physical Health Education; Grade 9-12 English Curriculum)
- Healthy Relationships Plus Program (youth in non-classroom settings)
- Uniting Our Nations (Culturally relevant, developed in collaboration with Indigenous educators, students, counselors, and community partners)
- Healthy Relationships Plus Program for LGBTQ2+ Youth

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