

# Teen Dating Violence and Healthy Relationships

Teen dating violence, a pattern of destructive behaviors used to exert power and control over a dating partner, is increasingly recognized as a widespread community issue affecting young people across gender, sexual orientation, race and culture. Approximately one in three teens in the U.S. have experienced some form of emotional, verbal, or physical abuse from a dating partner. Because lifelong violent behavior typically *begins* between the ages of 12 and 18, it's important to recognize teen dating violence for what it is and not trivialize what teens experience--it's not just playful bullying or normal "lovestruck" behavior. ([source](#) )

While there are many similarities to domestic violence, young people may experience increased risk and vulnerability because of their life circumstances and life stage. Youth may feel intense peer pressure and fear from the disapproval of adults, adding barriers to seeking help. Teens have less recourse to legal remedies and youth in unstable living situations are at increased risk for exploitation. In addition, the large role of technology in many teens' lives can be used as a tool by abusers that not only complicates the abuse, but allows it to stay more hidden.

Mutual respect, equality and open communication can be modeled as healthy relationship values and positively reinforced among peers and across generations. Those values are just a starting point. Think about and discuss what a healthy relationship means to you! Challenging and analyzing messages about gender roles, violence and other stereotypes are also powerful tools in reducing violence now and creating healthy relationships for the future.

Check out the [Teen Dating Violence Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#) pages to stay connected with our TDV work!

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