



**Dating Violence** occurs when a person displays a pattern of abusive behaviors designed to assert power and control over a current or former partner. This can include physical, emotional, psychological, economic, or sexual abuse, or a combination of these.

### Are you with someone who...

- Is jealous and possessive toward you, checks up on you, and belittles you in front of family and friends?
- Won't accept that you are breaking up with him/her?
- Tried to control you, doesn't like your being with friends, makes all the decisions and doesn't take your opinion seriously?
- Scares you by his/her reactions to things you say or do? Threatens you with using weapons?
- Is violent, has a history of fighting or losing his/her temper and brags about mistreating others? Destroys or damages your personal property?
- Forces you to have sex or is aggressive during sex? Pressures you to have unsafe sex? Thinks of women or girls as sex objects? Attempts to manipulate you or becomes too serious about the relationship too quickly?
- Uses drugs or alcohol and tries to get you to take them too?
- Has a history of bad relationships or blames you when he/she mistreats you?
- Hits, chokes, punches, kicks, slaps, pulls your hair or attempts other forms of physical harm?
- Your family and friends have told you they were worried for your safety?

### Why do people stay in abusive relationships?

People who have never been abused often wonder why a person wouldn't just leave. There are many reasons why both men and women stay in abusive relationships. If you have a friend in an unhealthy relationship, support them by understanding why they may choose not to leave immediately. Below are reasons why someone may stay in an abusive relationship:

- Fear of leaving abusive relationship and what will happen after
- Believing Abuse is Normal
- Embarrassment
- Low Self-esteem
- Love
- Social/Peer Pressure

### How do I know if my friend/daughter/son is in trouble?

What would you do if you thought your friend was in an abusive relationship? Most of the time, violence takes place when the couple is alone. You might not see dramatic warning signs like black eyes and broken bones, so how can you tell for sure? For one thing, listen to your instincts. You probably wouldn't be worried without good reason. Here are some signs to look for that might mean your friend/daughter/son is in trouble and needs help.

- Bruises, scratches, or other injuries
- Change in grades, mood, personality, attendance
- Use of drugs/alcohol
- Emotional outbursts
- Anxiety/depression
- Secrecy
- Fear or unease around dating partner
- Avoids eye contact or conversation with others
- Loses interest in friends, school, family, social activities



## Healthy Dating Signs

- Having fun together
- Feel safe with partner whether alone or in groups
- Your privacy is respected
- Family/friends are accepting of your relationship
- Partner communicates/listens to your ideas and concerns
- YOU have control of your time, possessions, “personal space”, etc.
- You trust your partner around other people and situations
- No pressure used or felt concerning sexual choices or involvement
- Each of you can accept responsibility for relationship changes
- Partner offers support for your interests, goals and choices
- You BOTH share in decisions made about your relationship
- Both of you can say “I am sorry” and mean it

## Ending it safely

Ending an abusive relationship can be difficult and even dangerous. Your boyfriend/girlfriend may become angry and violent, even if they have not been violent in the past. If you are thinking of ending your relationship, consider these safety tips:

- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. It may seem cruel to break up over the phone or by email, but these ways can provide the distance needed to stay safe.
- If you decide to break up in person, consider doing it in a public place. Have friends or your parents wait for you nearby. Take a cell phone with you if possible.
- Don't try to explain your reasons for ending the relationship more than once. There is nothing you can say that will make your ex happy about the break up.
- Let your friends and parents know you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your ex will come to your house or try to get you alone.
- If your ex comes to your house when you're alone, don't go to the door.
- Trust yourself. If you feel afraid, you probably have a good reason.
- Ask for help.

Just because an abusive relationship is over, that doesn't mean the risk of violence is over. Use these tips to stay safe after ending an abusive relationship:

- Talk with your friends about what you are going through so they can support you.
- If you can, tell your parents what's going on, especially if your ex might come by your home.
- Talk to your school counselor or a teacher you trust. Together you can alert security, adjust your class schedule or determine other ways to provide for your personal safety.
- Avoid isolated areas at school and local hangouts. Don't walk home alone.
- Stick with a friend at parties or events you think your ex might attend.
- Save any threatening or harassing emails or text messages your ex sends. Set your profile to private on social networking sites and ask friends to do the same.
- If you ever feel you are in immediate danger, call 911.