

Tools for Parents

This toolkit was designed to give you, as a parent, ideas for supporting your teen in a violent dating relationship. We also hope that you can use some of these tools to open up discussion between you and your teen about healthy relationships.

Studies estimate that as many as 1/3 of teens experience some form of violence in their relationships. Most teens say they talk with their friends about their social lives much more openly than with their parents. Often, parents are the last to know what's going on in their teen's relationship. It's very common for teens to want to be independent and competent, make their own decisions, and rely on their friends' advice. However, as a parent you can still play an important role in helping your teen pay attention to warning signs and be as safe as possible. This toolkit provides suggestions for how you can be involved and supportive while respecting your teen's need to navigate his or her own relationships. This way, when they're ready to talk, they know you are there.

"Tools for Parents" was compiled by Renton Area Youth Services (RAYS) and Youth Eastside Services (YES). RAYS coordinates DATEWISE, a peer-led dating violence prevention program in South King County Schools. Peer educators receive extensive training and provide education to high school and middle school students in the Renton area. The YES Teen Dating Violence Program provides individual counseling, support groups, and prevention workshops. Also, through its RESPECT program, YES provides peer prevention education in Lake Washington and Bellevue school districts. All services are free of charge.



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- ❖ **Dating Violence Definition** and **Statistics** provide important facts.
- ❖ The **Cycle of Violence** illustrates a common pattern of violent relationships that tends to happen repeatedly and the **Dating Violence Continuum** gives specific examples of different abusive behaviors which your son or daughter may be experiencing.
- ❖ **Teen Relationship Violence Fact Sheet** explains many common misconceptions about dating violence and points out more productive ways to view the issue.
- ❖ **Teen Developmental Tasks** and **Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence Relationships** both provide a reminder of the normal issues teenagers face while seeking their independence. These dynamics can make it hard for parents and other adults trying to intervene in a violent dating relationship, but are essential to keep in mind.
- ❖ **Talking to your teen about relationship violence** offers practical suggestions for how to speak to your son or daughter if you suspect they are either a victim of abuse or a perpetrator of abuse.
- ❖ **Safety Planning for Teens in Abusive Dating Relationships** suggests tips to increase safety.
- ❖ **Possible Effects of Dating Violence On The Victim** gives a list of symptoms a victim may experience, as well as some reasons why it's hard to “just break-up.”
- ❖ **Court Orders Available for Victims of Domestic Violence** is an overview chart of the four types of court orders available in the state of Washington.
- ❖ The **Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children** is enclosed to give you a sense of how violence in the home—physical, emotional, verbal, or sexual—can impact youth deeply.
- ❖ The **Resources** list includes local community agencies and crisis numbers, as well as recommended books that can be found in most bookstores or libraries.
- ❖ **Parenting for Healthy Relationships** gives ideas for teaching your teen about relationships by focusing on a few different dimensions.
- ❖ The **Relationship Contract** can be used to start an open conversation with your teen about what s/he wants in a relationship. It is useful for teens to develop a framework for healthy, positive relationships; talking about these concrete, specific aspects of a relationship can be really helpful.
- ❖ **A Mother’s Advice to Her Daughters** was written by a mother whose daughters experienced violent dating relationships.

DEFINING DATING VIOLENCE

Dating violence is:

◆ ABUSE

- Emotional
- Verbal
- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Social/Environmental

◆ A PATTERN

- Doesn't just happen once
- Usually gets more severe over time

◆ POWER & CONTROL

- One person tries to control or dominate the other
- Dating violence is not about love

DATING VIOLENCE STATISTICS

- 1 in 5 teens who have been in a serious relationship report being hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner.¹
- 1 in 4 teens who have been in a serious relationship say their boyfriend or girlfriend has tried to prevent them from spending time with friends or family.²
- 70% of girls and 52% of boys who are abused report an injury from an abusive relationship.³
- 23% of girls who have been in a relationship reported going further sexually than they wanted to as a result of pressure.⁴
- More than 70% of pregnant or parenting teens experience violence in their dating relationships.⁵
- In a study of high school students...
25% of the students told no one about the abuse,
26% told their parents, &
66% reported the abuse to their friends.⁶

¹ Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), March 2006

² Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), March 2006

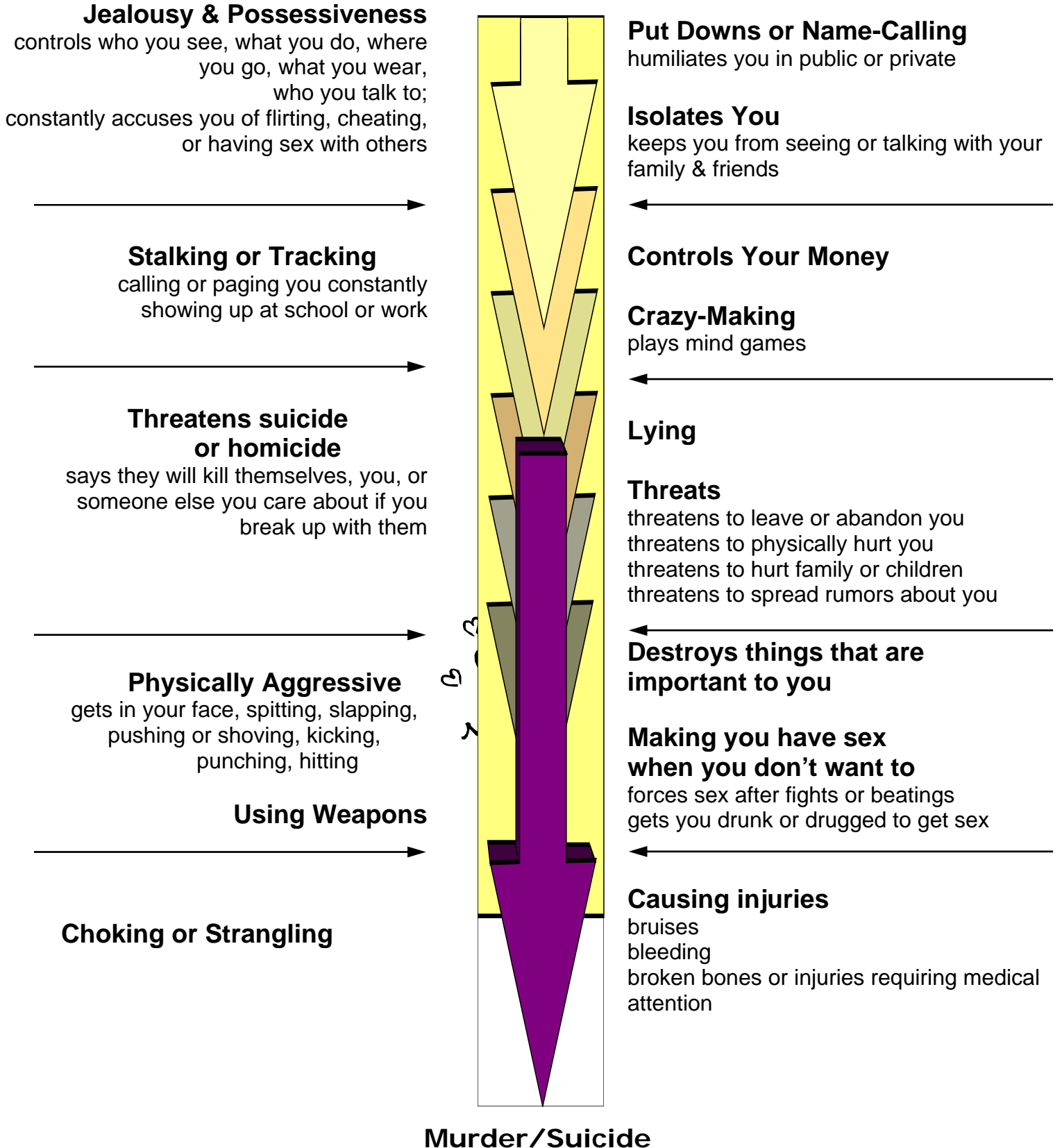
³ Foshee 1996

⁴ Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), March 2006

⁵ Barrie Levy, Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger, LACAAW, Children's Safety Network, 1998

⁶ Barrie Levy, Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger, LACAAW, Children's Safety Network, 1998

Dating Violence Continuum



Teen Relationship Violence Fact Sheet

Misconception: *"Abuse in teen relationships is not that common or serious."*

Reality: Surveys show that violence is experienced in 28% of teen relationships, and according to the FBI, 20% of homicide victims are between the ages of 15 and 24. One out of three women murdered in the US is killed by a husband or boyfriend.

Productive Thinking: **"Battering is not just an adult problem: it also happens with teens and we have to become more aware of the realities of relationship violence among young people."**

Misconception: *"Girls like the abuse or else they wouldn't put up with it."*

Reality: Young women and girls stay in abusive relationships for a number of complex reasons, none of which includes liking the abuse.

Productive Thinking: **"I have to recognize that no one stays in an abusive relationship because they like the abuse, but that leaving the relationship may be difficult."**

Misconception: *"Guys yell and hit to show how much they care about their partners."*

Reality: People yell and hit because they are using violence to try and control another person and/or are unable to control their own behavior.

Productive Thinking: **"The positive way of showing care for my partner is through understanding and respect--not violently or abusively acting out my emotions."**

Misconception: *"A guy has the right to discipline his girlfriend to show her whose boss."*

Reality: Discipline is used to exercise authority, such as a parent has over a child or a superior over subordinates. Unfortunately, many societies have taught and encouraged men to dominate women under the guise of discipline.

Productive Thinking: **"I do not have the right to try and control my girlfriend's or my boyfriend's behavior. The only person I have control over is myself. If I want to have a good, healthy relationship, I need to develop respect for my partner."**

Misconception: *"Alcohol and/or drugs are what cause people to become violent or abusive."*

Reality: Chemical substances are not the cause of violence but may act as enablers to violence by lowering inhibitions.

Productive Thinking: **"I realize that using alcohol may put me at risk for being a victim of rape, or enable me to be a perpetrator of violence."**

Misconception: *"Violence only happens between people who are poor or members of a minority."*

Reality: Abuse in relationships exists among all classes, races, and cultural groups in society. It even happens within same-gender relationships.

Productive Thinking: **"An abusive relationship can happen to anyone; we are not exempt because we belong to a particular group. Beliefs about other groups may stem from racism."**

Misconception: *"Guys who batter are psycho-crazies."*

Reality: Batters are 'normal' people that we encounter in everyday life. They can be the smartest, quietest, coolest, or the best athlete on campus. What they have in common is their inability to control their anger and aggressive impulses.

Productive Thinking: **"I cannot recognize batterers by how they look or act in public, but by how they behave in a relationship over a period of time."**

Teen Developmental Tasks

1. Separation

Teens are struggling to separate from the identity of their parents. They begin exercising their own identity through their relationships, clothing, music, etc. Because of their need to separate, it can be difficult for teens to confide in their parents.

2. Identity

Teens are more likely to act out traditional gender stereotypes of men being tough, powerful and in control, and women being sweet, passive and not too smart. The conflict between these stereotypes and their desire to express their individuality can make navigating a romantic relationship more difficult.

3. Competency

Teens are trying to exhibit their newfound intelligence and ideas as part of their identity. They desire trust from their parents to be given opportunities to show their ability to take care of themselves. When a relationship becomes unhealthy they often fear telling their parents. Teens are afraid of losing the trust and independence it has taken them so long to gain. They are also concerned that their parents will see their unsuccessful relationship as evidence of their inability to take care of themselves.

4. Relationships

Friends are the bridge away from dependence on family toward more independence. Friends are often more accepting of teens' newfound identities than are their parents. Because they are young, they have had very few dating experiences and role models of healthy relationships. This gives them little to compare and contrast with when in a relationship that turns unhealthy. Their relationships are very intense and that intensity grows very quickly. Due to their environment and tight knit peer groups, it can be very difficult for a survivor to get away from the abuser. Teens are also more likely to resist authority figures who offer help since adults often minimize the seriousness of their relationships.

Adapted from [Changing Bodies, Changing Lives](#)

Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence Relationships

- Teens resist seeking help from parents and other adults, especially authority figures. They fear losing newly gained independence and do not want adults to control future decisions about their relationships or other aspects of their lives.
- Lack of experience in relationships makes teens more susceptible to sex-role stereotypes. Teens feel confusion about all kinds of appropriate behavior in relationships: sexual behavior, decision making, birth control, etc.
- Lack of experience and peer group norms make it difficult for a victim to judge if his/her partner's behavior is out of line. Isolation from abuse makes it even more difficult to do a "reality check."
- Relationships are frequently perceived as very significant by teens and while they may be short lived, are experienced as intensely as adult relationships.
- The power differential between younger boys and girls may not be as strong as when they are older (14+). We do see more incidents of girls using physical abuse against boys (than the adult population) in younger teens.
- Peer intervention can end or escalate a violent relationship. Friends of the victim may beat up the abuser, which may temporarily protect the victim, but may ultimately increase the risk to the victim.
- The victim is often unable to avoid the abuser because they attend the same school, which increases the sense of fear and entrapment.
- Many adults do not take teen relationship problems seriously, discounting them as 'puppy love' or over-dramatized.

Adapted from "The Curriculum Project: The Minnesota Coalition Against Domestic Violence"

Talking to Your Teen about Relationship Violence

Los Angeles Commission on Assaults against Women
605 West Olympic Blvd., Suite 400 Los Angeles, CA 90015
(213) 955-9050 www.lacaaw.org

It isn't easy to broach the subject of dating violence with any young person, and this can be especially true of talking with your own child. Teens are often very protective of their privacy and can be evasive or even secretive when faced with such a discussion. Parents are often tempted to forbid their child from contact with the abuser or even keep them from leaving the house. Parents want to protect their children and it may seem as though the most effective way to do this is to control their child's life so that they can be sure that their child is safe. Unfortunately, this tactic can put parents and children at odds at a time when they most need to work as a team.

We have found that is most effective for parents to foster an open and supportive relationship so that their child feels that help is available. In difficult situations, parents can be allies and mentors to their children, it is important to keep the communication lines open so that children feel that they can access this help when they are ready. Although there are things parents can do to help their child if he or she is involved in an abusive relationship, there are some things that parents cannot do. Counseling is often the most effective form of intervention for both victims and perpetrators of abuse. Please consider getting your teen outside help from a person or agency that has expertise in addressing domestic violence.

Below please find a list of some things to remember when addressing a teen that is involved in an abusive relationship.

If you suspect your child is a victim of abuse...

Decrease Isolation

One of the things that keep people trapped in abusive relationships is that they feel estranged from everyone outside the relationship. Being required to keep the abuse a secret and hid evidence of it from friends and family contributes to a sense of being alone. It is more productive for your child to talk about her relationship, even if that means saying things that worry you or that you don't want to hear.

- Don't put the victim of abuse in a position where she feels she has to defend her relationship
- Maintain open communication with your teen—be aware that blaming them for what has happened may make them feel forced to keep things secret
- Establish connection with your teen
- Establish and maintain trust with your teen

Get your child to think about his/her feelings

In abusive relationships, survivors tend to become extremely focused on their partners, and how to minimize conflicts]. As a result of this process, the survivor often loses sight of his or her own feelings and needs. This is when a survivor needs permission and help to look at and explore his or her own emotions and to see him- or herself as a priority.

- Help to examine and clarify his or her own feelings about the relationship
- Don't label the behavior as abuse, ask questions so that your child can identify for herself
- Empower/encourage the survivor to think about his or her own feelings and make his or her own choices

Build Self-Esteem

People who are abused by their partner are frequently put down and made to feel worthless and ashamed. Abusive people tell victims that they are inadequate, or that they are unable to take care of themselves, perform simple tasks, or make their own decisions. The survivor needs someone to counteract this hurtful feedback by pointing out that (s)he is worthwhile as a person.

- Don't blame the survivor or make her feel guilty or at fault
- Validate emotions
- Validate strengths

Educate

Oftentimes, when one is involved in an abusive relationship, they are unaware of many of the patterns and dynamics associated with battering. Once made aware of this information, survivors are more able to make sense of their situation and see the abuse as part of a pattern.

- Talk to your teen about the cycle and/or patterns of abuse
- Debunk myths
- Identify resources

Safety Plan

Whether or not the teen is ready to leave the relationship, there are things they can do to be safer. Encourage your teen to think about and plan for his or her own safety. This may include devising an emergency signal, telling school staff about the relationship, or talking to friends. In any case, be sure that your teen feels both the right and the responsibility to think about his or her own well being.

- Build support systems (effective safety involves as many people as possible that your teen can call on or ask for help)
- Build self outside of relationship
- Encourage activities outside the relationship for relaxation and play
- Have your teen take a self-defense class
- Review and discuss the safety plan options with your teen

If You Suspect your Child is a Perpetrator of Abuse

Decrease Isolation

Relationship violence feeds on silence. It is important for participants in abusive relationships to know that other people know what is occurring in their relationship.

- Advise your child that you suspect or know about the abuse.

Get your Child to Think About His/Her Behavior

It is important to get a perpetrator to identify his or her own behavior and where that originates. Abusers will often blame the victim for the abuse. The victim is NOT the originator of the abuse; the perpetrator is.

- Make it clear to your child that he or she and no one else is responsible for his or her behavior.
- Help your child to clarify when and why he or she feels the urge to act out abusively
- Ask your child how he or she thinks they are making the victim feel when he or she uses abuse (build empathy)
- Ask your child if s(he) feel that this behavior is healthy or fair
- Express that you do not think this behavior is okay

Educate

It is possible that the teen perpetrator is unaware of the effects and realities of relationship violence. It is also possible that he or she has been given incorrect information in the past. It is important for teens to be made aware of what is going on in their relationship and what that means.

- Talk to your teen about the serious effects of abuse for both the victim and the perpetrator
- Debunk any myths your teen might have about abuse or the use of violence, name calling, or coercion

Safety

As the parent of a child who is abusive you have the unique opportunity to observe your child's mood and demeanor. You can use this information to keep the victim and his or her family safer by keeping them informed about the whereabouts and mood of the perpetrator.

- Inform the victim when your child seems angry or when it seems like (s)he may become abusive
- Tell the victim if you know your child is looking for him or her

Effects of Domestic Abuse on Children

All children who live in homes where domestic abuse is occurring are affected by this experience. The children will be affected differently, based on the following factors:

- their interpretation of the experience (often influenced by their age)
- how they have learned to survive and cope with the stress
- the availability of support from friends, relatives, and other adults, as well as their ability to accept support and assistance from those adults

The impact of this violence on children can be seen in many different ways. Each individual child will exhibit some of the following, and possibly exhibit different behaviors at different times:

Emotional Effects

- feeling guilty for the abuse and for not stopping it
- grieving for family and personal losses
- confusion regarding conflicting feelings toward the parents
- fearful of abandonment, expressing feelings, the unknown, of personal injury
- angry about the violence and the chaos in their lives
- depressed, feeling helpless and powerless
- embarrassed about events and dynamics at home

Cognitive/Mental Effects

- believe they are responsible for the violence or blame others for their own behavior
- believe that it is acceptable to hit people they care for to 1) get what they want, 2) to express your/their anger, 3) to feel powerful, or 4) to use others to meet their own needs
- have a low self-concept originating from a sense of family powerlessness
- do not ask for what they need, let alone what they want
- do not trust
- believe that feeling angry is bad because people get hurt, so they bottle anger
- learn a narrow definition of what it means to be male and what it means to be female; rigid gender stereotypes

Behavioral Effects (often seen in opposite extremes)

- act out vs. withdraw
- overachiever vs. underachiever-- refusal to go to school
- care-taking--more concern for others than self - parent substitute- aggressive vs. passive
- rigid defenses (aloof, sarcastic, defensive, 'black and white thinking')
- excessive attention seeking (often using extreme behaviors)
- bedwetting and nightmares

- out-of-control behavior, not able to set own limits or follow directions

Social Effects

- isolated from friends and relatives
- relationships are frequently stormy, start intensely and end abruptly
- difficulty in trusting, especially adults
- poor conflict resolution and anger management skills
- excessive social involvement (to avoid home life)
- may be passive with peers or bully peers
- engage in exploitive relationships either as a perpetrator or a victim
- play with peers gets exceedingly rough

Physical Effects

- Somatic complaints (headaches, stomach aches)
- Nervous, anxious, and a short attention span (often misdiagnosed as ADHD)
- Tired, lethargic
- Frequently ill
- Poor personal hygiene
- Regression in developmental tasks (bedwetting & thumbsucking depending on age)
- Desensitization to pain
- High risk in play and activities
- Self-abuse

Adapted from Eastside Domestic Violence Program Handout

Dating Violence Resources for Teens

Information, Referral, Emotional Support for Dating Violence Issues:

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| Youth Eastside Services | (425) 747-4937 |
| Eastside Domestic Violence Program (24 hr. Crisis Line) (V/TDD) | (425) 746-1940 1-800-827-8840 |
| Domestic Violence Recorded Information Line | (206) 205-5555 |
| Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline (V/TDD) | 1-800-562-6025 |

Support Groups for Dating Violence Issues:

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Youth Eastside Services (YES) | (425) 747-4937 |
|-------------------------------|----------------|

Legal Information Regarding Dating Violence Issues:

Although they can be obtained at any court, victims seeking protection orders are encouraged to utilize one of the courts in bold print below because of the availability of protection order advocates, who will help you complete the process, free of charge. Calling ahead will ensure availability and interpreter services if needed. If the victim of abuse is also a parent, going to King County Superior Court or the Regional Justice Center is recommended in case a Parenting Plan is needed.

For those who live north of I-90, go to **King County Superior Court**
Domestic Violence Protection Order Advocates--Seattle (206) 296-9547
(Assisting individuals age 16 years and older)

For those who live south of I-90 go to the **Regional Justice Center**
Domestic Violence Protection Order Advocates--Kent (206) 205-7406
(Assisting individuals age 16 years and older)

For those who live on the east side, go to the **N.E. District Court**
N.E. District Court Protection Order Advocates--Redmond (206) 205-7012
(Assisting individuals age 16 years and older)

Other legal resources:

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Bellevue Police Department—Domestic Violence Intervention Unit | (425) 452-4237 |
| Domestic Violence Protection Order Advocates—Kirkland | (425) 803-1900 |
| Issaquah District Court | (206) 205-9200 |

King County Courthouse: KCCADV Protection Order Advocates (206) 568-5454

Sexual Assault/Date Rape Resources:

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (24 hr. Crisis Line) (425) 226-7237
1-800-825-7273

Children's Response Center (425) 688-5130

Harborview Medical Center—Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress (206) 521-1800
TDD (206) 521-1808

Youth Eastside Services (425) 747-4937

Alcohol/Drug Issues:

24 Hour Teen Help Line (206) 722-4222

Youth Eastside Services (425) 747-4937

Support for Sexual Minorities:

Lambert House (206) 322-2515

NW Network for Bisexual, Transgendered, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse
(206) 568-7777
TTY (206) 517-9670

Youth Anger Management Programs:

Youth Eastside Services (YES) (425) 747-4937

General Information/Teen Hotlines:

Crisis Clinic (206) 461-3222
1-800-244-5767

Help in a crisis; also provides referral numbers for deaf and non-English speaking teens

Teen Link Phone Line (206) 461-4922

Bellevue Youth Link (425) 452-5254

Friends of Youth (206) 236-5437

Emergency shelter for 11-17 year olds

Culturally Specific Services:

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services 3134 | (206) 236- |
| Consejo Counseling & Referral Services | (206) 461-4880 |
| Refugee Women's Alliance 0243 | (206) 721- |
| Seattle Indian Health Board 9360 | (206) 324- |
| Asian Counseling & Referral Service 7511 | (206) 695- |
| Jewish Family Service | (206) 461-3240 |
| E. Cherry YWCA African American Family Network 7843 | (206) 568- |
| | (425) 226-1266 |

Certified Batterer's Treatment:

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Family Services DV Treatment | (206) 826-3044 |
|------------------------------|----------------|

An updated list of batterer's treatment programs is available by calling the Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-562-6025 or consult the King County Domestic Violence Website www.metrokc.gov/dvinfo

Literature:

What Parents Need to Know About Dating Violence
by Barrie Levy & Patricia Occhiuzzo Giggans

In Love & In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships
by Barrie Levy

Saving Beauty from the Beast: How to Protect your Daughter from an Unhealthy Relationship
by Vicki Crompton and Ellen Zelda Kessner

Parenting for Healthy Relationships

1. Teach Your Teen to Protect Him or Herself

Help your teen become aware of the issues involved in teen dating violence. Encourage him/her to evaluate the safety of various situations. Brainstorm all possible ways of handling a situation, using events from the newspaper, experience of a friend, TV or movies. Help teens develop self-awareness by encouraging them to think, choose and make decisions for themselves.

2. Teach Your Teen to be Assertive

Assertiveness is the ability to exercise one's own rights while respecting the rights of others. It means communicating exactly what you want and don't want, standing up for yourself, and stating your opinions, thoughts and feelings without abusing others. Help your teen learn the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive behavior. A self-defense course can develop assertiveness skills. Ask your teen "Have you ever said yes when you wanted to say no?" Practice what you could say or do if given another chance.

3. Practice Conflict Resolution in the Home

Productive confrontation involves honest communication, willingness to listen to others, compromise and problem-solving. When parents provide models of effective interpersonal interactions, they are teaching violence prevention skills.

4. Challenge the Attitudes and Images that Create a Tolerance for Violence in Intimate Relationships

Help your teen critique what they see in the media. You can repeatedly assert that no one deserves to be emotionally, verbally or physically abused, and that violence is never justified. You may find you have to confront some of your own values and attitudes.

5. Help Your Teen Identify and Define Healthy Relationships

Point out features of healthy relationships from books, movies or real life. In addition to feelings of love, emphasize the following characteristics of healthy relationships:

- Both partners give and take, each getting their way some of the time and compromising some of the time.
- They respect each other, and value one another's opinions.
- They support and encourage one another's goals and ambitions.
- They trust one another and learn not to inflict jealous and restrictive feelings on the other if they should arise.
- Neither is afraid of the other.
- They communicate openly and honestly, and make their partners feel safe in expressing themselves.
- They share responsibility in decision-making.
- They accept the differences between them.
- They encourage each other to have friends and activities outside the relationship.

Adapted from *What Parents Need to Know about Dating Violence* by Barrie Levy & Patricia O. Giggans

Relationship Contract

This “Contract” is to help you know better what you want in your close relationships. Two people in a relationship can use this contract to understand what each person wants and where they disagree. Write your answers down and, if you want to, compare answers with your friends or your partner.

Dating

1. Should every weekend and evening be spent with your girl/boyfriend?
2. Who decides what to do and where to go on a date?
3. What about expenses? Who should pay?
4. If your date always pays for expenses, are you obligated to go along with his or her sexual advances?
5. How much do you want you or your date to use alcohol or other drugs?
6. Is there any situation in which it would be okay for your date to get in your face or push you around? To call you names? To hit you?

Sexual Rights

1. Is either person free to say that they do or don't want to go any further sexually?
2. At what point may a person refuse to have sex?
3. If both you and a person you're with agree to have intercourse, whose responsibility is it to use birth control? To protect against AIDS?

Other Relationships

1. Are you or your boy/girlfriend free to make friendships with other people? If so, how will you deal with jealousy?
2. Is it all right for you or your girl/boyfriend to make friends with those of the opposite sex?
3. Do you include each other in those relationships?

Priorities

1. What qualities are most important to you in a boy/girlfriend?
2. What do you consider the most important ingredients in a relationship?

A Mother's Advice to her Daughters

...three of my children are women now; and sadly each has experienced a growing common reality—dating violence. If I had known then what I know now, I would have sat them down at the beginning of their teen years and told them:

“You are precious people. You are loving and caring, and no one has the right to take advantage of that. As you begin to dance the steps of dating, you will meet so many different people—some will recognize the gifts you bring, some will not be able to see you as an individual but only as a means to achieve their ends. It can be hard to tell them apart, sometimes. Even those of us who are older and wiser don't see the danger signs. But here are a few things that may help:

Never let anyone own you or your body. It was created for you. It is perfect just as it is. You don't need to make anyone else happy with it but you. Wear what you want. Sculpture it, colour it, and dress it as you choose; it is your expression of your inner self to the world. It will tell all of us what you want us to hear. And slavery is illegal.

Never let anyone blame you for their own troubles. You cannot control how someone decides to feel about anything, and they can't control you. You decide to be angry, sad, or joyous. That blame is a sign that they are not able to take responsibility for themselves, and that means you cannot count on them.

Never let anyone tell you that you are ready for something you are not yet comfortable with doing. You have an inner voice that knows you so well. It is the voice of self-love, and it will always have your best interest at heart. Trust yourself to know that you are able to think for yourself. With advice from those who love you most, you will make your own decisions.

Never accept violence (spoken or actioned) as forgivable. It is not. There is no excuse for using abuse as a way of saying 'I love you.' It is not love. It is a lack of respect and consideration for who you are.

And most important of all, if you are ever scared, hurt or confused, come to me. I love you unconditionally. I will never blame you. I will believe you. And I will always take you seriously. I am your mother, and I will honor you forever.”

--Jan Dymond
www.uic.edu/~schewepa/Mother.htm