

# Working with Survivors of Teen Dating Violence

Presented by  
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# Quote

“I have been with Carlos since I was 13...he used to choke me, do awful things...he used to make me feel that no one else would want me. I felt I better stay with him...he scared me. Sometimes we would be driving somewhere, and all of a sudden he would take off with me in the car...then he'd hit me because of something wrong I said. I was afraid of everything I said, afraid to say the wrong thing.”

--Maria, age 19

# Quote

“If you’re a guy and you are going through this, it’s really tough to talk about. We think guys are always supposed to be tough and in charge. She would mostly play with my mind, keep track of me, threaten me, and get super jealous. She’d erase all my e-mails from other girls ‘cause she didn’t want me to have ANY friends, especially girls.” --Tyler, age 16

# Quote

“I started to break up with him. But he would come to me crying, ‘I love you. I’ll never hurt you again.’ When I did see him cry, I’d remember the kindness and gentleness he could show. It would give me hope that we could work it out. I’d leave him and go back ...when his crying didn’t work, he started threatening to hurt me and my friends and my mom. It even got to the point where he threatened to commit suicide.” --Salina, age 13

# Dating Violence Statistics

- 1 in 5 teens who have been in a serious relationship report being hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.<sup>2</sup>

[1] Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), March 2006

[2] Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), March 2006

# Dating Violence Statistics

- 70 % of girls and 52 % of boys who are abused report an injury from an abusive relationship.<sup>1</sup>
- More than 70 % of pregnant or parenting teens experience violence in their dating relationships.<sup>2</sup>

[1] Foushee, 1996

[2] Barrie Levy, Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger, Children's Safety Network, 1998

# Dating Violence Statistics

- 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.<sup>1</sup>

[1] Barrie Levy, Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger, Children's Safety Network, 1998

# DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- Separation
- Identity
- Competency
- Relationships

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- 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.

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- The 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.

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- The 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."

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- Relationships are frequently perceived as very significant by teens and while they may be short-lived, are experienced as intensely as adult relationships.

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- The power differential between younger boys and girls may not be as strong as when they are older (14+). We see more incidents of girls using physical abuse against boys (than the adult population) in younger teens.

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- 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.

# Unique Aspects of Teen Dating Violence

- 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 relationships seriously, discounting them as “puppy love” or over-dramatized.

# Other Considerations

- **Some cultures dating is not allowed – often kept secret from parents**
- **Girls marrying at a young age to someone much older**
- **Language barriers**
- **Unique needs of male victims**
- **Working with GBLTQ youth**
- **Culturally appropriate services may not be accessible**
- **Exchange of dowry**

# Teens and Trauma

- Normative developmental challenges pose areas of vulnerability for teens exposed to trauma.
- Teens may react to earlier traumatic events and experience them anew.
- Early childhood traumas are frequently reactivated in adolescence.

# Teens and Trauma

- Adolescents have a tendency to take risks which expose them to trauma – especially if there is a history of early abuse.
- Girls who experienced trauma of any kind prior to the age of 15 were more vulnerable to developing PTSD.
- Teen development has both risk and protective effects.

# Harvard Study – Published in 2001

**SHOWED THAT TEEN  
VICTIMS OF DATING  
VIOLENCE WERE:**

- **8 to 9 times more likely to have attempted suicide**
- **4 to 6 times more likely to have been pregnant**
- **More likely to have engaged in sexual intercourse before the age of 15**
- **Significantly more likely to engage in substance abuse, binge drinking, cocaine use and heavy smoking**
- **And engaged in unhealthy weight control behaviors including use of laxatives and diet pills**

# Link to Drug and Alcohol Use

- **Teens use drugs and alcohol to cope with the pain of dating violence.**
- **Abuser uses substances as a way of controlling.**
- **May have victim “carry” the drugs if she is under 18 and the abuser is over 18.**
- **Overall use of illicit drugs have declined over the last few years, but use of prescription drugs (Oxycotin, Vicodin) has increased and are more readily available.**
- **Use of cocaine and club drugs have not declined.**
- **Experimentation with drugs and alcohol causes victims to minimize their abuse blaming themselves for using.**
- **Use of date rape drugs makes reporting and prosecuting abuse very challenging.**

# Link To Suicidality

- The American Bar Association's Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative Fact Sheet cites that 50% of youth reporting both dating violence and rape, report attempting suicide (compared to 12.5% of non-abused girls and 5.4% of non-abused boys).
- Speaks to the importance of assessing teens for suicide.
- Suicide often seen as the only way "out" of a dating violent relationship.
- Developmental tendency toward impulsivity increases risk.

# Link to Eating Disorders

- **Data was analyzed from Project Eat, a study of eating behaviors and weight related issues in teens. Participants were surveyed in 1999 and again in 2004.**
- **Both boys and girls displayed behavioral health problems, but the relationship was especially strong for girls.**
- **After being violated, the body becomes a battleground on which teens try to regain control by either not eating (anorexia) or vomiting food (bulimia).**
- **Treating teen survivors of dating violence who also have eating disorders, requires working with a medical team.**
- **Encourage health professionals to screen for dating violence.**

# Link to Self-Injury

- **Nearly 50% of people who self-injure report a history of physical or sexual abuse.**
- **Self-injury is a maladaptive way of coping – it's a way of not killing oneself.**
- **Used as a way to release unbearable feelings and pressures. It reduces a teens' physiological and psychological tension rapidly.**
- **Forms and severity of self-injury can vary, but most commonly–seen is cutting, burning and head banging.**
- **Goal is to replace the behavior first with healthy coping skills.**

# Link to Teen Pregnancy and Sexual Risk

- **70 – 80% of teen mothers are victims of dating and domestic violence.**
- **Young women who reported being hurt in the previous year were also twice as likely to report being pregnant.**
- **Pregnancy is used as a way to control partner and isolate them from their family.**
- **Negotiating birth control methods have perceived (and real) consequences.**
- **Teen victims are more likely to have been diagnosed with STI's or HIV.**
- **Teen victims are much more likely not to have used a condom – refusal by abuser common.**

# Treatment Implications

- Establishing who your client is
- Building trust/safety
- Communicating respect
- Allowing teen to have a sense of control
- Prioritizing needs
- Assessing the impact
- Educating the client
- Evaluating the availability of support

# Intervention

## Treatment Goals

- **Decreasing isolation**
- **Increasing sense of personal power**
- **Finding healthy coping strategies**
- **Reducing PTSD symptoms**
- **Enhancing self-esteem**
- **Exploring boundary setting**
- **Decreasing shame and guilt**
- **Allowing story to be told**
- **Dealing with anger**
- **Addressing body image, sexuality, decision-making**

# Working with Teens

- Relationship, relationship, relationship!
- Empower
- Utilize peers
- Support need for autonomy
- Remember the “invincibility”
- Address drug/alcohol use, mental health, physical health
- Groups – often best modality
- Recognize the challenges of confidentiality
- Provide information on healthy relationships

# Age of Consent

- Age of consent in Washington is 16.
- 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Rape of a Child: victim is < 12, offender is > 24 mo. older.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree: victim is 12 or 13, offender is 36 mo. or more older.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree: victim is 14 or 15 , offender is 48 mo. or more older.

# Intervention

## Report

- If teen is under 18 years old and discloses abuse by a relative, call Child Protective Services.
- If teen is under 18 years old and discloses abuse by another teen or adult, call your local police department.
- Encourage teen to be involved in the reporting process.

# Protection Orders for Teens

- Teens 16 years or older must obtain a Protection Order on their own behalf.
- Protection Orders for teens are particularly difficult to manage: e.g. school.

# Intervention

## Assessing Safety and Lethality

- Access to weapons
- Access to alcohol and drugs
- Peer secrecy
- Gang-related issues
- Prior juvenile justice involvement
- History of assaulting parents/siblings

# Working with Parents

- Right to confidentiality in Washington is 13 years of age
- E-mail or mail "Parent Tool Kit"
- Tune into parent's own trauma
- Reporting the abuse may increase conflict at home making it less safe for teen

# Activity

## Case Study:

- Reporting issues?
- Confidentiality challenges?
- Triage?
- Safety concerns?

# Coping

## Healthy Coping

- **Gets involved in school activities/community service**
- **Talks with friends for support**
- **Talks with family**
- **Writes poetry, stories, or in a journal**
- **Uses art or music**
- **Does sports, exercise, self-care**
- **Goes to counseling or support group**
- **Gets involved in peer-education, making a difference**

# Intervention

## Hotlines

- **Crisis Line—24 Hour**  
**866.4CRISIS**  
**866-427-4747**
- **Teen Link: staffed by teens from 6-10 PM**  
**206-461-4922**  
**866.TEENLINK**
- **Domestic Violence Agencies –**
- **KING COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCE CENTER –**  
**(800) 825-7273**

# Allies in Healing

- **Schools**
- **Juvenile Justice**
- **Youth Programs/Workers**
- **Youth and Family Agencies**
- **Teen Centers**
- **Teen Parent Programs**
- **Teen Clinics**
- **Teen Advocates**
- **Teen Crisis Lines**
- **Faith Communities**
- **Groups like “Voices”**
- **SRO’s**

# Youth Eastside Services

## Teen Dating Violence Program

- Individual counseling for survivors of dating violence (age 13-22)
- Support groups for survivors of dating violence
- Crisis counseling available at schools on the Eastside
- Prevention workshops
- Peer prevention education

# Surviving and Thriving

**" I CAN LOOK BACK ON MY RELATIONSHIP NOT WITH SHAME, BUT WITH PRIDE. I AM PROUD OF MY OWN COURAGE, WHICH ENABLED ME TO GROW STRONG. I AM PROUD THAT I HAD THE STRENGTH TO SAY 'NO' TO AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP. I HAVE BECOME SOMEONE WHO LOVES HERSELF ENOUGH TO SETTLE FOR NOTHING LESS THAN HAPPINESS AND SELF-REPECT." -- ERIN, AGE 17**

