

Teen Dating

<http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/datingmatters/>

Research shows that young people are interested in exploring with relationships. They don't have a lot of real-life experience to help guide them. This can lead to controlling behavior, aggressive actions, and even physical violence. Positive relationships with friends, family members, educators, and other trusted adults can both support the development of healthy dating relationships and lower the risk of dating violence.

Friendships and dating relationships provide an opportunity for youth to learn and practice important skills such as healthy communication, social skills and managing strong feelings. Giving youth room to develop independence is important during this process, but it's also our job as adults to make sure this time of exploration and discovery remains safe and productive. When we're young, we learn a lot about how to communicate with others by watching our family members, teachers, coaches, and other important adults in our lives. As educators, it's our responsibility to foster a safe environment where youth learn how to think critically about the ways they communicate and connect. In fact, school may be one of the first places youth learn to navigate the world beyond their home and family. In this role, it is also important for us to both model and teach youth the skills needed to form and maintain healthy relationships. For example, educators can model staying calm in the face of strong feelings or a difficult situation, using healthy communication skills, and examining a situation from multiple perspectives.

A survey of U.S. high school students suggests that 1 in 5 female students and 1 in 10 male students who date have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual teen dating violence during the past 12 months.

Among adult victims of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 7 men first experienced some form of partner violence between 11 and 17 years of age.

We know that emotional/psychological violence is the most common type of dating violence. Numbers range depending on the survey and type of population surveyed (e.g. just girls or just boys), but about a **third to three quarters** of youth who date report perpetrating this type of violence against a dating partner at least once. Sexual dating violence is often reported at lower rates than the other types of dating violence.

Studies show that being a victim of teen dating violence increases a young person's risk for depression, anxiety, and even suicide.

- Characteristics of healthy and unhealthy teen relationships
 - Healthy Relationships: Belief in non-violent conflict resolution. Effective communication skills. Ability to negotiate and adjust to stress. Belief in a partner's right to autonomy. Keeps their individuality. Each partner feels free to spend time apart, enjoy other friends, and keep the activities and interests that are important to them. Each person feels like they can be themselves. Listens. Each partner takes the time to get to know the other person and what he/she values. Points out the positive. Each partner is respectful and encouraging toward the other person, including pointing out positive qualities and giving compliments. Uses healthy communication. It is important that each partner communicates in a healthy way. This includes being honest with each other and expressing thoughts and feelings by using respectful

- words. Is an equal partner. Each partner treats the other as an equal, and both make decisions in the relationship. Has fun.
- Unhealthy Relationships: Physical — when a partner is physically attacked such as pinched, hit, shoved, or kicked. Emotional/Psychological — threatening a partner or harming his or her sense of self-worth. Examples include name calling, coercion, shaming, bullying, embarrassing on purpose, or keeping him/her away from friends and family. This form of teen dating violence can happen in person or online, such as through email or social media. Sexual — forcing a partner to engage in a sex act when he or she does not or cannot consent. Sexual violence is not just rape. It includes forcing any type of sexual act, including touching or kissing. People can force others into sexual contact by using physical force, or by using words—such as threats or pressure. Some forms of sexual violence do not involve physical contact and include acts like exposing sexual body parts to someone else.
 - Early warning signs and factors that may increase a teen’s risk for dating violence:
 - Failure to participate in school activities. Poor academic performance. Thoughts of suicide. Fear. Depression and/or anxiety. Drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. Injury. Delinquent behavior. Experiencing violence in subsequent relationships. Alienation from friends and family. Physical and health problems. Juvenile or criminal record/confinement. Loneliness. Expulsion from school. Loss of job.
 - Statistics, examples, and consequences of teen dating violence:
 - According to a recent study, teen girls who experienced recent dating violence were 60% more likely to report at least one suicide attempt in the past year than those who did not experience recent dating violence.
 - Both male and female students who say they have experienced TDV are more likely than their peers to experience a range of health-risk behaviors, including: using alcohol, binge drinking, using marijuana, thinking about suicide and attempting suicide, carrying a weapon, having more sexual partners.
 - Dating violence victimization has been linked to: academic underachievement, negative views of school, and dropping-out.
 - Ways to promote healthy relationships and prevent unhealthy and violent ones:
 - When you became an educator, you became a role model. Teens take notes on more than just the subject matter or activity or sport you teach. They watch how you handle your emotions and interact with other youth and adults. Think about how you would like teens to communicate and relate to one another and model that. You can also teach these same skills to youth.
 - “Use your words” isn’t just for kindergarteners. The simple act of naming something diminishes its power. Calmly expressing difficult feelings, or emotions, and using healthy communication skills provides a positive example for teens. You can also teach these same skills to youth.
 - Not speaking up when you are around one teen hurting another is the equivalent, in their eyes, of endorsing behavior. You cannot wait for a student to ask for help. Remember that seeking help, even for adults, can be difficult when it comes to anything about a relationship, including unhealthy or violent behaviors. You may need to be the one to offer to connect the teen to a resource or get a professional involved.