

RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

All kinds of intimate relationships can be abusive or violent. It happens to couples who are married, living together or dating, or even to those who have just met and there's some kind of attraction between them.

WARNING SIGNS THAT A RELATIONSHIP COULD BECOME VIOLENT

- Your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you, soon after you begin dating, to make the relationship very serious, or presses you to have sex.
- You don't feel comfortable saying "no" when your boyfriend or girlfriend wants you to do something such as drink or use drugs.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend becomes extremely jealous and possessive, and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to control you and to forcefully make all decisions concerning the two of you, refusing to take your views or desires seriously. He or she may also try to keep you from spending time or communicating with close friends or family.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend verbally and emotionally abuses you by yelling at you, swearing at you, manipulating you, spreading false and degrading rumors about you, and trying to make you feel guilty.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend uses drugs and then later blames the alcohol and drugs for the behavior.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend threatens physical violence.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend has abused a previous boyfriend or girlfriend or accepts and defends the use of violence by others.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures, controls or disrespects you using technology such as text message, email, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- If you're in a dating relationship that in any way feels uncomfortable, awkward, tense or even frightening, trust your feelings and get out of it. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE IN A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS OR COULD BECOME VIOLENT

- Accept the fact that the violence will not just stop or go away.
- Accept the fact that you cannot change your boyfriend or girlfriend's behavior by changing your behavior, and that you are not responsible for the abuse.
- Recognize that your boyfriend or girlfriend may need counseling or other outside help to change.

RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING *Continued*

- Seek help. Talk with someone you trust, such as a teacher, a guidance counselor, a doctor, a friend or a parent.
- Contact the police or a local domestic violence center.
- Call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at (866) 331-9474 or (866) 331-8453 TTY, or visit the website www.loveisrespect.org. This is a helpline that teens can access to talk on the phone or chat online with other teens trained on healthy relationship issues.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO MIGHT BE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

- Try to find out for sure by saying something like, “You don’t seem as happy as usual” or asking in general terms, “Is there anything you want to talk about?”
- Listen without judging, condemning or giving unwanted advice.
- If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she talk to a trusted adult or contact a local domestic violence organization. Offer to go along. Encourage your friend to visit www.loveisrespect.org.
- If you believe your friend is in serious danger, talk immediately with an adult you trust about your friend’s situation so you aren’t carrying the burden alone. Don’t try to “rescue” your friend or be a hero by trying to handle the situation on your own.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO MIGHT BE AN ABUSER

- Talk to the person privately about his or her use of violence and where to go for help.
- Try to get your friend to understand that the behavior is both wrong and illegal. Be clear and direct.
- Try to get your friend to talk to a counselor or teacher or another trusted adult about his or her behavior. The likelihood is high that those who perpetrate violence against a partner at a young age are witnessing violence or are in danger themselves; getting them help is key.
- Talk to mutual friends about what you are seeing and how you can help your friend change his or her behavior.
- If you believe your friend is in serious danger, talk immediately with a trusted adult about your friend’s situation so you aren’t carrying the burden alone. Don’t try to “rescue” your friend or be a hero by trying to handle the situation on your own.