

*Pride Education Equality Respect
Center Against Domestic Violence
Relationship Abuse Prevention Program*

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Introduction

The Center Against Domestic Violence and School-Based Teen Violence Prevention Services

The Center Against Domestic Violence works toward a society free of violence and abuse by offering education and prevention programs, and promoting the well-being and economic independence of survivors of abuse.

Mothers and children deserve to live in homes free of violence. Although safe shelter could provide a refuge from homes that might be the sites of unspeakable violence and danger, in 1976 when the Center was founded, shelters were considered unfit environments for children. Rather than separate from their children, many women stayed in abusive relationships, sometimes dying at the hands of batterers. The Center's founders worked to change that, and in 1977 opened Women's Survival Space, the first domestic violence shelter in New York State to admit mothers and children. Since then, serving youth has remained a focus of our organization.

Ending the cycle of violence starts with education and awareness. We are proud of our role as one of the first and the largest providers of teen relationship violence prevention services in New York City. In the past decade, the Center has designed, developed and implemented school-based teen relationship abuse prevention programs in New York City schools that have reached more than a million students with the message that healthy, equal, consensual relationships are necessary for a hopeful future. The cornerstone of the Center's Education and Community Services Department is our school-based prevention programs – PEER (Pride Education Equality Respect) geared to high school students, Speak Your Peace geared to intermediate school students, and most recently, Relationships are Elementary geared to elementary school students. The Center fields these programs at seventeen New York City high schools. A certified social worker is assigned to each school. In addition to facilitating workshops like the ones in this curriculum, the social worker offers workshops to the entire student body, counseling and peer leadership activities for students, and training for parents and staff. Through these programs, the Center intends to stop domestic violence in the next generation by developing leaders who will work to end violence in the lives of others.

Why a School-Based Program is Necessary

Learning and safety go hand in hand. As educators know, students who are safe and feel secure are in a far better position to learn and achieve academically.

Teen relationship abuse is both common and toxic to the school community. Data show that relationship abuse is at epidemic proportions, blocks academic achievement, and threatens school safety. In a case study of restraining orders issued against teenagers in dating relationships, school was the most frequent place for physical abuse to occur. Eighty-four percent of the physical abuse occurred on school property. A significant number of students who are victimized by their dating partners will see them in school the next day, giving rise to new violence, harassment and anguish.

Victims of teen dating violence are more likely than their classmates to be involved in other forms of violence at school. Ninth grade victims are 6.4 times as likely to bring a gun to school and 3.5 times more likely to bring another weapon. They are 3.7 times more likely to be injured or threatened with a weapon, 3 times more likely to be in a physical fight and 3 times more likely to damage school property as other ninth graders. (1) Teen date violence threatens school safety for all students.

Because of the private nature of this abuse, it can be undetected or ignored, with disastrous impact on students' ability to grow and learn. For a variety of reasons, many schools fail to address the danger of teen relationship abuse, in spite of federal safety requirements and the potential for legal liability for student harassment. Most important, by failing to act, schools are missing the opportunity to help thousands of students overcome a major obstacle to academic success. Adolescent male abusers who inflict severe physical violence on their dating partners are more likely to be unemployed, have few social supports, and have low educational attainments. (2)

Teen relationship abuse generates negative effects on students that seriously undermine a school's ability to promote academic growth and achievement. Teenagers involved in relationship abuse have a difficult time learning academic subjects. Girls experiencing relationship abuse feel self-conscious and afraid, do not want to go to school, and find it difficult to study. (3) Victims of teen relationship abuse often exhibit harmful behaviors, such as using alcohol, tobacco or drugs; becoming pregnant; and attempting suicide.

1 WestEd, Los Alamitos: *Tenth Biennial California Student Survey 2003-2004*, preliminary report to the California Attorney General's Office.

2 Lynn Magdol, Terrie E. Moffitt, and Avshalom Caspri, "Gender Differences in Partner Violence in a Birth Cohort of 21-years-olds: Bridging the Gap Between Clinical and Epidemiological Approaches," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 65 (1997) 68-78

3 Lipson J, Ed. *Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing and Sexual Harassment in School*. New York: AAUW Educational Foundation, 2001.

Schools, then, provide a unique opportunity to help young people involved in abusive relationships and to prevent the cycle of violence from beginning among others. School-based programs are the most effective way to reach teenagers.

Teen Relationship Violence and Abuse

Violence is an ugly fact of life for an overwhelming number of young people. They experience it as victims, abusers, or witnesses in their schools, neighborhoods, or homes.

Studies from a variety of communities throughout the United States consistently demonstrate extremely high numbers of young people experiencing physical violence, as well as emotional and psychological abuse, at the hands of their dating partners. Teen relationship violence is shockingly common:

- In a Harvard School of Public Health study, one fifth of female 9th through 12th grade students reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, at the hands of a dating partner. ⁽⁴⁾
- The California Student Survey (CSS) asks intermediate and high school students about health related behavior and attitudes. In the 2003-04 CSS, more than 5 percent of 9th graders and more than 8 percent of 11th graders reported they had been physically hurt on purpose by their partner in the past 12 months. ⁽⁵⁾
- In 2005, in New York City 9 percent of male and 11 percent of female high school students reported they had been physically hurt on purpose by their partner in the past 12 months. ⁽⁶⁾
- According to the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, females between 16 and 24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other group – at a rate almost triple the overall average. ⁽⁷⁾
- In 2007, in New York City, teenagers made 16,861 calls to the Domestic Violence Hotline; 9,462 teen calls were received in 2006, and 12,645 in 2005. ⁽⁸⁾

4 Silverman J, Raj A, Mucci L, Hathaway JE. Dating Violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy and suicidality. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2001; 286:5:572-579.

5 WestEd, Los Alamitos: *Tenth Biennial California Student Survey 2003-04*, op.cit.

6 New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, [A Report from the New York City Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#). *NYC Vital Signs*, October 2007, VI:5

7 US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-99*, (Oct. 2001, rev. 11/28/01).

8 Mayors Office to Combat Domestic Violence, *Domestic Violence Fact Sheet Calendar Year 2007 (Statistics provided by Safe Horizon)*

Teen relationship abuse is the use of physical, sexual, emotional, financial and other types of abuse by one partner in a relationship to gain power and control over the other. The term “teen relationship abuse” is meant to be as inclusive as possible; it can occur in a wide range of intimate relationships, including dating (seeing or going with someone), living together, same-sex relationships, or in a couple who have a child in common. Relationship abuse is not always physical and includes emotional abuse that the abuser uses to control the victim. Emotionally abusive behavior, which includes threats and intimidation, isolation from friends and family, humiliation, intimidation, and coercion, can escalate to physical violence. Physical violence, including hitting, pushing, choking and sexual assault, is potentially deadly.

While the pattern of power and control and the severity of abuse mirror adult domestic violence, teen relationship abuse is different because of issues specific to adolescence. For example, while teenagers struggling to accept their changing bodies may be more vulnerable to insults, they may be more dependent on a partner whose compliments make them feel attractive, despite that partner’s abusive treatment. And, as teenagers strive to become less dependent on their caregivers, they become more susceptible to abusers’ isolation tactics; they can develop an unhealthy dependence on abusive partners. The struggle to develop a sense of identity can cause teen victims to rely on abusive partners’ definitions of themselves. Peer group and other social pressures may make it more difficult for teen victims to leave abusive relationships if, for example, they gain status or popularity by being in the relationship.

Additional forces keep teenagers in abusive relationships or make it harder for them to identify themselves as victims and seek help:

- fear of the abuser and increased violence;
- anxiety about disclosing the relationship to parents;
- concern about being blamed or not believed by friends, or parents;
- cultural or religious issues;
- financial dependence of the victim, or the victim’s family, on the abuser; and,
- childhood abuse, neglect, or exposure to adult domestic violence.

Teen victims may confuse possessive and controlling behavior with love and may develop coping mechanisms that result in minimizing or denying the abuse. This is clearly demonstrated by the following research:

- In a study of 500 adolescents in New York City, between 17% and 23% of the respondents had been intimidated, threatened, hit, or slapped by their partners, and 25% reported being verbally abused through insults,

- humiliation and embarrassment. However, only 14% of these same teenagers described themselves as being in abusive relationships. (9)
- Another study of more than 600 high school students revealed that nearly one-third of the respondents surveyed interpreted violent acts as acts of love. (10)

Teen relationship abuse is not limited to male-on-female attacks.

- According to the California Student Survey, in 9th grade there was little difference in the gender of victims, and in 11th grade females were only 1.6 times more likely to report teen relationship abuse. (11)
- In a University of North Carolina study of 8th and 9th grade boys and girls, in which more than a quarter of the respondents reported being a victim of nonsexual dating violence, there was no gender difference. (12)
- Regardless of who initiates the violence, girls are much more frequently and severely injured than boys. (13)

9 *Domestic Violence Survey at Covenant House New York*, Covenant House Public Policy and Legislative Advocacy Notes 3 (Spring 1999) 1.

10 Kris Worell, "When Teenage Relationships Become Abusive," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 14, 1993, as cited in Toby Simon and Bethany Golden, *Dating Peer Education for Reducing Sexual Harassment and Violence Among Secondary Students* (Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, 1996).

11 WestEd, Los Alamitos: *Tenth Biennial California Student Survey 2003-04*, op.cit.

12 Foshee VA, Linder GF, Bauman KE, Langwick SA, Arriaga Xb, Heath JL, McMahon PM, Bangdiwala S. *The Safe Dates Project: Theoretical Basis, Evaluation Design, and Selected Baseline Findings*. Youth Violence Prevention: Description and baseline data from 13 evaluation projects. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Supplement 1996; 12 (5) cited on National Center for Injury Prevention and Control website <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/datviol.htm>.

13 Makepiece JM (1986) cited in Levy B. *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*, 1998, Seattle: Seal Press.

Curriculum Overview

The PEER curriculum consists of five basic workshops. At the high school level, they are: Introduction to Relationship Abuse, Gender Roles, Sexual Harassment, Date Rape, and Building Blocks of Healthy Relationships.

There are many handouts and activities for each workshop. It may take more than one session to complete all the activities in a workshop. When all the activities cannot be completed due to time constraints, facilitators may select those exercises which they feel will work best with students. The hand-outs from unused exercises may be given out as take home papers. Additional handouts may be used at the discretion of the facilitator as substitutions or as enhancements to the existing material. *Optional activities are italicized.*

The Center has taught PEER as a component of its partnership with the City of New York's Relationship Abuse Prevention Program or RAPP. RAPP is a partnership between community-based organizations like the Center Against Domestic Violence, the New York City Human Resources Administration and the New York City Department of Education. Through RAPP, the Center Against Domestic Violence reaches 27,000 teens and preteens each year with the information and tools to build healthy, nonviolent relationships.

Optional Pre and Post Survey Instructions

Pre and post surveys are included with this curriculum. These are invaluable tools to evaluate whether students have learned the material presented. You may choose to use the pre and post surveys, or develop and use other measures to evaluate whether students' beliefs and behaviors have changed.

If you are using the surveys, prior to beginning the first workshop, distribute the pre survey to the students and ask them to complete it. At the conclusion of the fifth workshop students complete the post survey. The students put their name in the space at the top to match the survey results. When students turn-in their completed surveys, they receive a completion certificate.

Definitions or Vocabulary

Each session starts with a list of definitions. These may be posted on the board or used for the facilitator's information.

Local and State Laws and Regulations

Laws and regulations vary by location. Some of the information about rape and safety planning included here is specific to New York State and New York City. Contact your district attorney's office for local updates.

Pre and Post Survey

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Decide whether each of the examples below describes someone who might become abusive by putting a check in the "yes" or "no" box. Check "Yes" if you believe it is a warning sign and "No" if you think it is not a warning sign.

1. It might be a warning sign if my partner blames others for his/her problems.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. It might be a warning sign if my partner has been violent in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. It might be a warning sign if my partner becomes extremely possessive and jealous.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. It might be a warning sign if my partner thinks it is important for us to each have our own friends.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. It might be a warning sign if my partner shows up at my house unannounced to check up on me, or constantly calls to find out where I am and what I am doing.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
6. It might be a warning sign if my partner is always honest with me, even when I don't like what my partner has to say.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Match each example with the type of abuse that best describes the behavior.

Types of Abuse:

- A. Emotional Abuse
- B. Financial Abuse
- C. Not Abuse
- D. Physical Abuse
- E. Sexual Abuse
- F. Verbal Abuse

- 7. Barry calls his partner stupid and ugly. _____
- 8. Derrick makes his partner pay for everything when they go out even though they both have jobs. _____
- 9. Martin tells his partner that he will break up with his partner if they don't have sex. _____
- 10. A couple sometimes spends Saturday night separately with their own friends. _____
- 11. Sheila slaps her partner because her partner disagreed with her. _____
- 12. Carla threatens to tell embarrassing secrets about her partner to other people. _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Class: _____

Choose whether the following statements are true or false:

13. People cannot be raped by someone they have already had sex with.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
14. Guys can be sexually abused.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
15. Someone who forces their partner to have sex is not interested in having a healthy relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
16. When someone shows a pattern of abusive behavior, they are trying to gain power and control over their partner.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
17. If someone I know is in an abusive relationship they can get help by seeing the PEER Coordinator, talking to a teacher or guidance counselor, or by calling 1-800-621-HOPE.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
18. By New York State law, a person who is under 17 years old is legally incapable of consenting to sexual intercourse or other sexual contact.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
19. Making obscene gestures is not a form of sexual harassment.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False
20. If you are fooling around with someone and they want to have sex, and you do not want to, it is wrong to say no.	<input type="checkbox"/> True	<input type="checkbox"/> False

High School Post-Survey

ANSWER KEY:

1. Yes
2. Yes
3. Yes
4. No
5. Yes
6. No
7. (f) verbal
8. (b) financial
9. (e) sexual
10. (c) not abuse
11. (d) physical
12. (a) emotional
13. False
14. True
15. True
16. True
17. True
18. True
19. False
20. False

Unit Brief - Introduction to Relationship Abuse

Although Teen Relationship Abuse occurs at epidemic levels, it often goes unrecognized. Abusers, their targets, and bystanders may believe that abusive behavior is normal, or fail to see the abusive actions as part of a pattern.

In this session, students will gain an understanding of different forms of relationship abuse and their effects on teens.

This session concentrates on:

- Identifying forms of abuse
- Understanding the roles of target, abuser, and bystander
- Recognizing and understanding vocabulary related to teen relationships and violence
- Defining and differentiating physical, verbal/emotional, sexual, and financial abuse
- Examining power and control and its relationship to teen abuse

The exercises in this session are designed to help teens recognize different forms of violence, and how abuse and violence can be tools to gain power and control over the other person in a relationship. Participants have the opportunity to examine their relationships with new understanding.

PEER High School Workshop 1 Introduction to Relationship Abuse

Objective:

Students will be able to identify the various forms of abuse and understand the effects of teen relationship abuse.

Materials:

- Board and chalk or chart paper and markers
- *Optional Pre-surveys*
- Facilitator Answer Key and *How to Use Is It Abuse If . . . ?*
- Handouts
 - *Types of Abuse*
 - *Teen Relationship Abuse*
 - *Teens at Risk*
 - *Is It Abuse If . . . ?*
 - *Are YOU Abusive?*
 - *Signs of Dating Partner Abuse*
 - *Teen Relationship Abuse*
 - *Teens At Risk*

Definition:

Relationship Abuse - a systematic pattern of behaviors aimed at gaining or maintaining control of a partner.

Process:

- **(2 minutes) Setup and Introduction** - Introduce yourself and explain the objective of this workshop
- **(3 minutes) - Ground Rules** - Establish or ask students to establish ground rules which should include:
 - Confidentiality
 - Respect for each other (only one person speaks at a time, no name calling or put-downs)
- **(4 minutes) Optional Pre-Survey** - *Explain how surveys will be used. Make sure students understand that they will not be graded.*
 - *Distribute Pre-surveys*
 - *Students complete Pre-surveys*
 - *Collect completed Pre-surveys*

- **(5 minutes) DO NOW** - Graffiti Board Activity
 - Ask the question: "What words come to mind when I say the word abuse?" Have students write down their thoughts on the board or paper in the front of the room.
 - Discuss the words and explore if and how they are forms of abuse.
 - Use this activity to lead into a discussion of the 5 types of abuse

- **(7 minutes) Types of Abuse**

Distribute and discuss *Types of Abuse*

- Discussion points:
 - Relationship abuse is...
 - What does an abusive relationship look like?
 - Anyone can be abused. Abuse happens in all types of relationships.
 - In high school, young men are as likely to be abused as young women.
 - Among adult over 21 however, 85 percent of reported cases of domestic violence involve women who have been abused by men. Why?
 - Is a relationship abusive if it's "just" emotional/verbal abuse?
 - Is jealousy abuse?

- **(10 minutes) Is It Abuse If . . . ?**

Distribute and ask students to complete *Is It Abuse If . . . ?*

Students may work as a class or in small groups. Involve the whole class by doing a "body count" (students go to one side of the room if they believe the example is abuse, the other if they believe it is abuse or the back if they're unsure).

- Discuss answers to *Is It Abuse If . . . ?* and why they chose those answers (See Answer Key).

Summary:

- Ask students what was covered in this workshop
- Solicit or provide:
 - Definition of relationship abuse
 - Five types of abuse

Distribute:

- *Are YOU Abusive?*
- *Signs of Dating Partner Abuse*
- *Teen Relationship Abuse*
- *Teens At Risk*

Types of Abuse

Relationship abuse is any behavior that is aimed at gaining or maintaining control of a partner. Add your ideas in the space provided.

Verbal Abuse is: (examples include name calling and put downs)

Emotional Abuse is: (examples include mind games, humiliation, isolation)

Physical Abuse is: (examples include pushing, hitting, restraining, spitting)

Sexual Abuse is: (examples include pressure about sex, rape)

Economic Abuse is: (examples include attempts to keep the partner financially dependent, forcing partner to justify the need for money)

For more information about relationship abuse, talk to _____ in Room _____.

8. Tanisha starts play-fighting with her girlfriend, who tells her to chill. She keeps playing with her, but is only playing and doesn't cause any bruises or hurt her physically.
- | | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | No | Unsure |
|-----|----|--------|
9. Maria starts play-fighting with her boyfriend, and they wrestle around on the floor, resulting in bruises on her arm.
- | | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | No | Unsure |
|-----|----|--------|
10. Mark decides to break up with his boyfriend. The boyfriend does not want to end the relationship, and threatens to "out" Mark if he goes through with his plan to break up.
- | | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | No | Unsure |
|-----|----|--------|
11. Angela treats Luis to a nice dinner and a movie. After the date, she invites him up to her place, but Luis declines. Angela accuses him of playing her, saying that she should "get something in return" for her generosity.
- | | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | No | Unsure |
|-----|----|--------|
12. Fred waits for his girlfriend every day after school outside of the building.
- | | | |
|-----|----|--------|
| Yes | No | Unsure |
|-----|----|--------|

Answer Key
Is it abuse if...?

1. Yes. Susan is violating her partner's trust by invading his privacy.
2. Unsure. Taking a walk or a "time out" is an effective way of dealing with anger. It is important to "cool down" before you talk to someone. Responding to an argument with physical violence is NEVER an acceptable choice! However, if Joe continues to ignore his partner's feelings and never wants to discuss a problem, then his taking a walk around the corner each time he gets angry has the elements of control. A good relationship is one where two individuals can resolve conflict in a peaceful and calm manner. Feelings can be openly expressed. Conflicts are resolved by coming to a compatible agreement.
 - a. Discuss control concepts.
3. No. Each person in the relationship maintains the right to have friends and spend time with friends. A good relationship is one where each partner has a circle of friends and interests outside the relationship.
 - a. Discuss the elements of a healthy relationship.
4. No. Both people in the relationship have the right to dress as they wish. No one should change his or her style of dress to suit his or her partner's wishes.
5. Yes. Juan is embarrassing his boyfriend in front of their friends, whether intentionally or unintentionally.
6. No. Betty never verbalizes her concerns to Tom and makes no effort to stop him. She is not verbalizing her needs and desires to Tom. Because she is unassertive, she can be manipulated. Each partner is responsible for discussing what she or he is thinking and feeling.
7. Yes. Although Lorraine has asserted her protestations, she is manipulated into having sex. She may believe that if she doesn't give in then she would lose Edgar. The abusive act is that he pressured her.
8. Yes. Tanisha did not respect her partner's personal space. A good relationship is one based on friendship and respect. Although no physical harm was done, this was an invasion of personal space and a crossing of personal boundaries.
9. No. In the example cited, there are no indications that this horseplay was anything other than poor judgment on both their parts.

10. Yes. The threat of being “outed” for those who have not yet “come out,” is particularly stressful. This may mean confronting a major life decision that the individual is not prepared to make, especially to parents, employers and relatives. This threat gives the abusive partner a weapon for control.
 - a. Discuss domestic violence in the gay and lesbian community.
 - b. Discuss intimidation to gain power.
 - c. Discuss isolation and the limitation of services in the gay community.
11. Yes. Financial abuse is when one person in a relationship attempts to control the other’s attitudes and behaviors through the use of money.
12. Unsure. This example as written could either be a consensual decision on the part of the couple or the boyfriend’s attempt to control his partner.
 - a. Discuss stalking and emotional control.

Are YOU Abusive?

Check the box if you:

- Call frequently to check up on your partner to make sure she/he is not out with someone else.
- Get very jealous when your partner talks to people of the opposite sex.
- Get upset when your partner spends a lot of time with friends, and expect her/him to want to spend all of her/his free time with you.
- Feel that your partner's friends want the two of you to break up.
- Call your partner names like stupid, ugly, fat, or other put-downs.
- Curse at your partner.
- Tell your partner how to dress.
- Ever threatened to hurt your partner, or her/his friends or family.
- Ever told her/him you might hurt yourself if she/he left you.
- Blame your partner for your behavior.
- Threaten to break up with your partner if she/he doesn't do what you want.
- Ever tell your partner "You would if you loved me."
- Ever cheated on your partner.
- Make fun of your partner in front of other people.
- Expect your partner to quit after school activities (sports, school clubs) to spend more time with you.
- Discourage your partner from getting a job or going away to college.
- Make all of the decisions about what the two of you do.
- Get angry if your partner offers to pay.
- Get angry if your partner wants to go out with friends.
- Buy your partner presents to make up for hurting him/her.
- Feel extremely jealous of your partner's friends and family.
- Have angry outbursts, yell loudly, throw things, or punch walls.
- Ever made your partner have sex or do sexual things she/he didn't want to.

All of these behaviors are ways of controlling another person, and are NOT components of a healthy relationship.

If you checked a few boxes it does not necessarily mean you are an abuser, but you should think about those behaviors. However, if you have a pattern of controlling behavior, then there is cause for concern. The more boxes you checked, the more risk there is that you are abusing your partner.

To talk more about this, you can go see _____, in Room _____.

Signs of Dating Partner Abuse

- Extreme Jealousy and Possessiveness: A teen might report that his/her partner doesn't like it when s/he talks to other people. A partner who keeps constant tabs on a teen is potentially abusive.
- Changes in Appearance: A teen who starts dressing in a more revealing manner may be experiencing pressure to be sexier. S/he may begin to dress more conservatively at the insistence of a jealous partner, or cover up to hide bruises. S/he may appear disheveled or pay less attention to personal hygiene due to stress or lowered self-esteem.
- Quick Involvement: Although teenagers often fall in love quickly, an abuser usually comes on strong, claiming pre-destined and eternal love, pressuring the partner for a long-term commitment.
- Signs of Controlling Behavior: An abused teen often can't make a move without checking with his/her partner first.
- Physical Injuries: When bruises or marks are common and s/he can't explain them, (or their story to explain them doesn't make sense), they may be covering up abuse. Bruises or cuts in various stages of healing also indicate multiple injuries rather than one incident.
- Changes in School Performance: A sudden drop in grades may be the result of stress, depression, or having to spend all of his/her time with the partner. Frequent lateness or absence from school is also common.
- Substance Abuse: Many victims of abuse turn to drugs and/or alcohol as a coping mechanism.
- Eating Disorders: Young women who are in abusive relationships may develop eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia; these are a product of damaged self-image or a need for control.
- Isolation: A student who is being abused may begin to drop out of extracurricular activities, quit his/her job, separate from friends and become less social and more withdrawn. This is part of a pattern of isolation.
- Anxiety or Jumpiness: A student who is being abused may seem very jumpy, easily scared, nervous, or anxious, especially when his/her partner is in the room. S/he may be especially nervous about being late to meet his/her partner.
- Signs of Decreased Feelings of Self-Worth and Depression: An abusive relationship lowers self-esteem; as the relationship goes on, the teen may display less confidence and become very self-critical.
- Complacency Toward Goals: The teen who once had great plans for college and a career may suddenly seem not to care about these things. He or she may be focusing more on supporting the partner.

Teen Relationship Abuse

"I was insulted, accused of crazy things, humiliated and had my mind twisted. I was constantly criticized and called names. I was put down, no, verbally attacked for things that were not a problem the day before. I was blamed for everything that went wrong. Often, I had no idea what was wrong."

"We spent all of our time together. It was wonderful at first, but it became obsessive. I was either with him or talking to him on the phone. He became more and more jealous. At one point, I even had to be on the phone with him when I went to sleep so that he knew I was at home at night. I was allowed to talk to only two people at school -- both were girls, and he had his friends watch me to make sure I was obedient."

"He often showed it through his extreme jealousy and possessiveness. I couldn't talk to another boy... He resented my girlfriends and my family. He said, 'all we need is each other.' If he chose to go out with his friends or not bother to call me, I was supposed to sit at home and wait for him to call. If I wasn't there, I was interrogated over and over about where I was, who I talked to, even what I wore. The hassle wasn't worth it. I became more and more isolated, more dependent on David, and afraid of David's temper if I didn't do what he wanted".

Levy, Barrie. In Love and In Danger. 1993. Pages 31-33.

Teens at Risk

1. Studies throughout the United States show that anywhere between 20% to as high as 69% of teens experience violence at the hands of their dating partners.¹
 2. In a study of 500 teens in New York City, between 17 and 23% of those interviewed had been intimidated, threatened, hit or slapped by their partner, and 25% reported being verbally abused through insults, humiliation and embarrassment. Yet only 14% of these teens described themselves as being in abusive relationships.²
 3. Another study of over 600 high school students revealed that nearly one-third of the respondents interpreted violent acts as acts of love.³
 4. Teens in all ethnic groups, socioeconomic groups, and geographic regions experience relationship violence. Relationship abuse can also happen in same-sex relationships.
 5. Both male and female teens may be victims, but boys more often cause serious physical injuries and use more force. Girls are more likely to receive injuries requiring medical attention.
 6. Teen relationship abuse is extremely unreported. Various studies estimate that as few as 4% of teens involved in violent relationships report the violence to authority figures such as teachers, counselors or police.⁴
 7. Nearly 80% of teens who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser.⁵
 8. One study shows that 30% of battered women married men who had abused them while dating.⁶
1. Jazel, Molidor and Wright, "Physical, Sexual and Psychological Abuse in High School Dating Relationships: Prevalence Rates and Self-Esteem Issues," Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal 13 (February 1996) 69
 2. "Domestic Violence Survey at Covenant House New York," Covenant House Public Policy and Legislative Advocacy Notes (Spring 1999).
 3. Kris Worell, "When Teenage Relationships Become Abusive," Atlanta Journal Constitution, April 14, 1993, as cited by Toby Simon and Bethany Golden, Dating: Peer Education for Reducing Sexual Harrassment and Violence Among Secondary Students (Holmes Beach, FL: Learning Publications, 1996).
 4. Libby Bergman, "Dating Violence Among High School Students," Social Work 37 (1992) 23.
 5. Bergman
 6. Bruce Roscoe, et al., "Courtship Violence Experienced by Abused Wives: Similarities in Patterns of Abuse" Family Relations (July 1985)