



The Girl Connection

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE ADOLESCENT FEMALES INVOLVED WITH OR AT RISK FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM
THE IOWA GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES TASK FORCE / SUMMER 2002

Love Is Not Abuse: A Reality Check About Dating Violence

Do you worry about violence in girls' dating relationships?

If you do, you're not the only one.

- ☞ In a recent survey, 26% of teenagers said they are *very* concerned about dating violence.
- ☞ Thirty-one percent of teens said they or a friend experienced dating violence.
- ☞ Almost 50% of all teens surveyed said they were interested in getting more information about abuse.

From *Applied Research & Consulting LLC for Liz Claiborne, Inc., Spring 2000* at http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/fast_facts.asp



Dating Violence — The Danger Zone

Dating violence isn't an argument every once in a while, or a bad mood after a bad day. Dating violence (or relationship abuse) is a ***pattern of violent behavior*** that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend. Abuse can cause injury or even death, but it doesn't have to be physical. It can include ***verbal & emotional abuse – constant insults, isolation from friends & family, name calling, controlling what someone wears*** – and it can also include ***sexual abuse***.

It can happen to anyone, at any age, no matter what race or religion they are, no matter what their level of education or economic background. Dating violence also occurs in same-sex relationships.



Study: Dating violence affects 1 in 5 teen girls

One in five teenage girls is a victim of dating violence and thus at increased risk of drug abuse, pregnancy, suicide, and other harmful behavior, suggests a recently released study by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

In 1997 and 1999, researchers surveyed 4,163 public high school students in grades 9-12 in Massachusetts, but they say the results likely apply to teens nationwide.

Students were asked if they had ever been shoved, slapped, hit, or forced into any sexual activity by a date. The study suggests many teenage boys “have adopted attitudes that men are entitled to control their girlfriends through violence,” says lead author Jay Silverman of Harvard University’s School of Public Health.

From *National School Board News, August 14, 2001. Vol. 21, No. 15* at <http://www.nsba.org/sbn/01-aug/081401-index.htm>

Teens: Test Your Knowledge About Dating Violence

- Which of the following could be considered a sign of relationship abuse?
 - My boyfriend didn't call me last night
 - My boyfriend called me a slut in front of his friends because I was wearing makeup
 - My boyfriend forgot our anniversary
- Which of the following is considered a crime?
 - Robbery
 - Rape
 - Relationship violence
 - All of the above
- What kind of behavior could be considered relationship abuse?
 - Keeping someone away from her/his friends or family
 - Calling someone names
 - Controlling what someone wears
 - All of the above
- Which of the following statements is correct?
 - 10% of teenage girls age 14-17 report knowing someone their own age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend
 - 25% of teenage girls age 14-17 report knowing someone their own age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend
 - 40% of teenage girls age 14-17 report knowing someone their own age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend
- I think a friend of mine might be in a violent relationship. What should I do?
 - Take her shopping
 - Talk to her, ask if everything's okay, in a calm non-judgmental way
 - Have your boyfriend beat up her boyfriend
 - Mind my own business
- I think a friend of mine is hitting his girlfriend. What is the first thing should I do?
 - Sit down with him one-on-one, in a quiet place, and start talking to him about it
 - Go immediately to a school counselor
 - Don't say anything
- If everyone said you and your boyfriend were a cute couple but he was starting to get violent, what could you do?
 - Talk to a friend
 - Talk to a parent
 - Talk to a teacher, counselor or another trusted adult
 - All of the above
- What can you do if you end a violent relationship, but your ex-boyfriend keeps trying to see you?
 - Explain your situation to an adult you can trust
 - Avoid situations where you might see your ex
 - Call the police if you are threatened or if you feel afraid
 - All of the above

Answers on last page

From Liz Claiborne, Inc., sponsor of Love Is Not Abuse at <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/quiz.asp>

Tips to Share with Teens

Just because a violent relationship is over, doesn't mean the risk of violence is over. For those of you who work with girls and young women regularly, here are some recommendations that you can share with her so she feels safe & can maintain peace of mind.

- ☞ Tell her to talk to friends she trusts (or you) about what she is going through so they can support her & look out for her.
- ☞ If possible, encourage her to talk with her parents about what is going on, especially if her ex might come into her home. Offer to accompany & support her if she decides to talk with her parents.
- ☞ Encourage her to talk to her school counselor. Together they can alert security, adjust her class schedule or come up with other ways to make her feel safe. If needed, offer to accompany her.
- ☞ Discuss ways for her to stay safe such as avoiding isolated areas at school & local hangouts or walking home alone.
- ☞ Encourage her to stick with a friend at parties that she thinks her ex might attend.

If a teen is in an abusive relationship & needs help, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224 for the hearing impaired.

**Iowa Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-942-0333**

**Iowa Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-284-7821**

If a teen is in danger, call 911 immediately.

Answers to quiz

- 1. b** – Constant insults may indicate one partner is trying to exert power & control over the other & therefore may be a sign of a potentially violent relationship.
- 2. d** – Just like robbery & rape, hitting your girlfriend or boyfriend is a crime. You should never hesitate to contact the police about a violent episode, even if it involves a girlfriend or boyfriend.
- 3. d** – All of the above behaviors indicate someone who is trying to control their partner & could be signs of, or lead to, relationship violence.
- 4. c** – Unfortunately, almost half of teenage girls polled across the country said they knew a teen that had been hit or beaten by her boyfriend. That's why it's so important for people to know that dating violence really happens, to know what some of the warning signs are, & to know some of the things they can do to help their friends (or themselves).
- 5. b** – The first step in helping someone in a violent relationship is simply to talk to them, let them know you care about them, & encourage them to open up to you about what's going on.
- 6. a or b** – It's important to speak up. If you're friends, there have to be some good qualities about him, & you'll be doing him a favor by helping him deal with his violent behavior. Try sitting down with him, but if you think someone is in danger, or if you're afraid this violent behavior might be turned against you, take action by going to a trusted adult yourself.
- 7. d** – The best thing you could do if you found yourself in a violent relationship is to go to someone who cares about you & that you trust. Together, you can talk it out & figure out what you want to do about the situation.
- 8. d** – Even if you've ended a violent relationship, your ex may still be interested in seeing you. It's important to have as much support as possible, so if you can, let the people close to you know what's happening. Stay alert & anticipate when or where you might see him or her, so you can be prepared and, ideally, not alone.

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The Girl Connection is provided as a service of the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force, coordinated by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Department of Human Rights.

For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force, or if you are willing to receive future issues via e-mail to save mailing costs, please contact us:

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