



Challenges of Teen Dating

The violence that occurs between partners, both younger and older, is about power and control. Like adult domestic violence, dating violence occurs in all groups regardless of socioeconomic status, sex, race, age, religion, gender, educational background and sexual orientation. While we all may face challenges at different times in our lives, adolescence may be an especially difficult time. Below are some factors that may make teens especially susceptible to dating violence.

1. **Limited or no experience with healthy dating relationships.** Teens and young adults may not know what to expect from a relationship and may lack examples of healthy relationships. Abusive behaviors may be misunderstood as “normal” challenges or “compromises” in dating relationships.
2. **Desire to gain independence from parents/authority figures.** In a period where teens are learning to develop their individual identities separate from their parents, it is understood that teens may want to formulate their own strategies to solve any relationship issues they may experience. They may refuse to consider any suggestions their parents/authority figures may offer. Teens also may try to hide any problems in fear that their parents will limit their newly gained independence.
3. **Pressure from peers to conform to expected gender roles.** Friends and peers are important social networks that may greatly influence the lives of teens. Social cues about how to dress and behave may confine teens to gender roles that hurt men and women, heterosexual and LGBT. When dominance and toughness are understood to be characteristics of masculinity and compliance and emotional sensitivity are understood for be characteristics of femininity, teens may not be aware of power imbalances that may be developing in their relationships.
4. **“Romanticizing” love; confusing jealousy with love.** With schemas about love that may be heavily influenced by fairy tales and popular culture, some teens may believe that jealousy and controlling behavior are true signs of care and commitment in a dating relationship. They may believe that it must be only intense feelings of love, not a desire for power and control, which can drive a partner to behave in such a manner.
5. **No support network; many victims become isolated as a direct result of abuse.** Isolation can be very damaging. Without positive messages and care and concern from others, a victim may continue to suffer alone. Also, if the abuser is well-respected by their peers, the victim may be hesitant to seek help for fear of not being believed.

Asian Women's Home

A program of Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI).

Services provided in English and Asian languages.

24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline: 408-975-2739