

Can teenagers experience dating violence?

Sometimes people think that relationships between teenagers can't really be that serious -- at most, it's only "**puppy love.**" But the truth is, teenage dating relationships can be very serious and intense, sometimes even more so than adult relationships, because teens have less experience and perspective, so a first love can seem like the most important thing in the world.

Did you know?

- **40 percent** of teenage girls aged 14-17 report knowing someone their own age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.
- **8 percent** of high school-aged girls answered "yes" when asked if "**a boyfriend or date has ever forced sex against your will.**"

Adolescence can be tough. Bodies are changing, hormones are raging. Teens crave independence from their parents and rely heavily on their peers for acceptance and approval. Teens are insecure about their own identities and prone to self-doubt, and they are vulnerable to emotional and physical violence in their relationships.

Here are some warning signs of a violent relationship. Check out the list below, and if you think your friend, sister or daughter is in a violent relationship, talk with her about it. Don't rush to judge her or give her ultimatums -- just listen to what she has to say and offer your support.

1. She seems worried about upsetting her boyfriend or making him angry.
2. She apologizes for his behavior and makes excuses for him.
3. He acts extremely jealous when she talks to other boys, even when it is completely innocent.
4. She often cancels plans at the last minute, for reasons that sound untrue.
5. He's always checking up on her, calling or paging her, and demanding to know where she has been and whom she has been with.
6. You've seen him lose his temper, breaking or hitting things when he's mad.
7. When she and her boyfriend are together, he calls her names or puts her down in front of other people.
8. She is giving up things that used to be important to her, such as spending time with friends or other activities, and is becoming more and more isolated.
9. Her weight, appearance or grades have changed dramatically. These could be signs of depression, which could indicate abuse.
10. She has injuries she can't explain, or the explanations she gives don't make sense.