

Dating Violence

Dating violence happens often and can happen to any one. Talking to your kids about dating violence is not easy, but knowing the facts and signs is a great start:

- **Relationships can become abusive slowly and subtly.** Approximately 1 in 3 high school students have been or will be involved in an abusive relationship.
 - It has been reported that 7% of all murder victims were young women who were killed by their boyfriends.*
- **Abuse can be verbal/mental/emotional** and includes deception, disrespect, threats, unkindness, belittling, put downs, embarrassment and humiliation...
 - Signs that your son/daughter is being verbally abused:
 - *Withdrawn behaviour, unusual quietness and/or depression*
 - *Emotional outbursts - sadness or crying more often than usual*
 - *Indecision*
 - *Changes in mood or personality*
- **Abuse can be physical** and includes hitting, kicking, slapping, biting, punching, pushing...
 - Signs that your son/daughter is being physically abused:
 - *Withdrawn behaviour unusual quietness and/or depression*
 - *Unexplained bruises or injuries*
 - *Shows signs that he/she fears their partner*

- **Abuse can be sexual** and includes, unwanted sexual attention, forcing someone to have sex or to engage in sexual activities without their consent or while under the influence of alcohol/drugs.
 - Signs that your son/daughter is being sexually abused:
 - *Withdrawn behaviour and/or unusual quietness*
 - *Unusual nervousness and/or nervous/shy/uncomfortable behaviour (esp. around the opposite sex)*
 - *Unwilling to accept normal emotional gestures like hugs and kisses*
 - *Use/abuse of drugs and alcohol*
 - *Pregnancy*
 - *Truancy or failing grades*

Some characteristics may be indicative of an abusive or potentially abusive personality:

Your son/daughter's partner ...

- Seems extremely jealous or possessive and wants your son or daughter to spend all their time with them
- Does not seem family oriented and tries to discourage them from spending time with you and your family
- Uses or abuses alcohol and drugs
- Abuses other people, animals, or things for fun
- Believes in rigid sex roles and stereotypes
- Views pornographic material
- Shows hypersensitivity
- Blames others for feelings or problems
- Has been abused or abused a former partner

If you have seen any of these signs in your son/daughter's mate, or you believe they may be the abuser, open the lines of communication and consider talking to them about their relationship.

- Ask questions and listen with an open mind
- Be calm and prepare to take positive action
- Respect your teen's choices and avoid power struggles
- Deal with your anger in calm, reasoned and constructive ways
- Help set up a safety plan if your teen is trying to end the relationship
- Manage your frustration so it does not affect your teen
- If comfortable and appropriate, communicate your concerns to the parent of your son/daughter's partner

If your teen is the abuser, also consider these points:

- Recognize and acknowledge your awareness of the controlling and abusive behaviour
- Seek help for your teen through community and mental health programs
- Do not judge or condemn them, but *support* their effort to stop the pattern of abuse

Experts say that the person who abuses needs to feel that he is "in control", and often isolates the victim from friends and family. This isolating keeps the victim from getting needed help with the situation, increases her feelings of low self-worth, and leaves her more open to other forms of violence.

- www.suite101.com

Note: Though females are most often the victims of abuse, both males and females are known to be victimized in relationships.

*From the Domestic Violence Advocacy Program of Family Resources, Inc.

Date Rape

Date / acquaintance rape is a sexual assault that occurs by someone known to the victim. Any sexual activity without consent is considered a sexual assault.

54% of rapes occur while on dates. Providing your teen with dating safety tips can help prevent a sexual assault. Discuss with your son/daughter...

...double-dating the first few times when going out with a new person.

...advising family and friends of the person they are going out with, the time and location of the date as well as the expected time of return.

...to be aware of a decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or drugs and encourage abstinence from such substances on a first date.

...to avoid leaving a party with someone they do not know well.

...not to accept drinks that they did not open/pour and to never leave it unattended.

...driving their own car or bringing cab fare in the event that they are ready to leave early.

...being straightforward about their intentions when it comes to sexual activity.

...the importance of following their instincts. Reinforce this by telling them it's ok to leave if they feel uncomfortable in any way.

Date Rape Drugs:

- The most common date rape drug is Rohypnol; also known as "Roofies", "Rib" and "Roches"
- It is a dime-sized hypnotic sedative causing a drunk like feeling that lasts for 8 hours or more
- It is colourless, odourless, and tasteless and easily dissolves in alcohol and soft drinks
- It takes effect in about 10 minutes and takes about 24 hours for all traces to be eliminated
- GHB, also known as "Liquid X", is another commonly used date rape drug with similar effects

Resources

**Kids Help Phone
1.800.668.6868**

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Offers counselling services for youth and parents

**Family Services Association of Metropolitan Toronto
416.595.9230**

Offers counselling for those seeking support in dealing with relationship and family problems

**Distress Centre
416.408.4957**

Provides 24-hour telephone counselling

**Toronto Rape Crisis Centre
416.597.1171
trcc@web.net**

Offers crisis intervention and support for survivors of sexual assault, families and friends

**Straight Talk Youth Counselling Toronto
416.709.8652**

www.straight-talk.com

Offers counselling for youth 13-24 years

**Assaulted Women's Helpline
1.800.863.0511
www.awhl.org**

Offers 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line for women, their family and friends

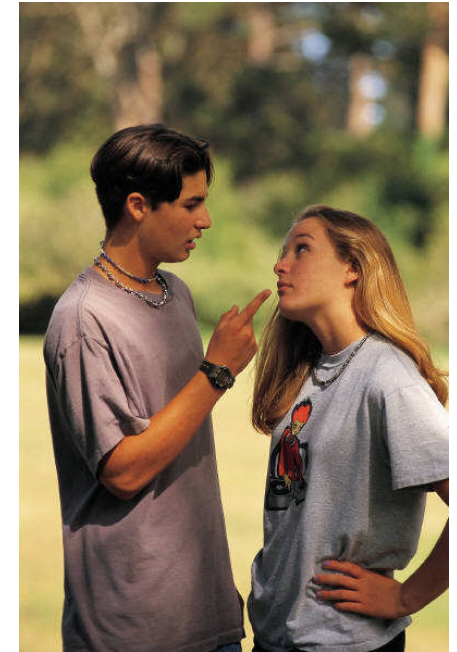
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Talking to your kids about Dating Violence



**It Could Happen...
Be Prepared!**

Dating violence is any action taken upon a dating partner that intentionally causes physical, emotional or mental harm or distress.

