

# What is Teen Dating Violence?

Dating violence is physical, sexual, mental, or emotional threat or aggression in any interpersonal or dating relationship. Dating abuse and violence include stalking, harassment, and intimidating with fear and threats. Today's teens are more accessible than ever via text and social media platforms, which may be used for manipulation. These aggressions are not limited to current relationships, but can sustain following a break-up or begin after a break-up between partners.

Learning your child is in an unhealthy dating relationship can trigger anger, resentment, and fear, as well as an urge to intervene. You may feel a desire to take matters into your own hands to get even and defend your child. These feelings are normal and originate from a place of defensive nurture. Take time first to collect your own thoughts so you can respond in a way that offers the highest degree of safety and security for your child and family.

Often, teens do not report abusive situations or the abusive partner for many reasons, including:

- Fear they will not be believed by their peers, teachers, friends, or the partner's family
- Worry of social isolation or retaliation from peer groups
- Psychological intimidation and feeling controlled by their partner
- Concern they will risk siblings' or family members' safety if they reported the abuse
- Belief that dating violence is normal and proves the partner loves them
- Impact of symptoms of depression, anxiety, panic, and trauma
- Feelings of guilt, shame, or embarrassment
- Fear of revealing that drug or alcohol use has become a regular part of their relationship with their partner, with worry over legal consequences for themselves or their partner



Dating violence can be prevented when adults model and reinforce key concepts like:

- ▶ Using healthy, effective communication in all relationships
- ▶ Managing thoughts and feelings in healthy ways
- ▶ Asking for help, confiding in others, and maintaining trust
- ▶ Addressing emotions like anger, frustration, and envy in constructive ways
- ▶ Encourage and support boundary setting
- ▶ Supporting self-efficacy and decision-making
- ▶ Promoting self-awareness and healthy self-esteem
- ▶ Modeling and encouraging healthy partner communication and conflict resolution
- ▶ Encouraging stigma and shame free open discussions with teens, checking in on a regular basis and getting to know your child's partner.

## **Pennsylvania and National Resources**

*National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline* • [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org) • **866-331-9474**

*Provides one-on-one service from peer advocates. The helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and offers translation services. Assistance via online chat services is available 4 p.m. to midnight CST, 7 days a week.*

*National Domestic Violence Hotline* • [ndvh.org](https://ndvh.org) • **800-799-SAFE**

*Operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, provides services in more than 170 languages.*

*Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) Hotline* • [rainn.org](https://rainn.org) • **800-656-HOPE (4673)**

*Offers assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from on-duty volunteers to answer questions and provide support and local resources.*

*Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)* • [pcadv.org](https://pcadv.org) • **800-799-SAFE (7233)**

*Offers a 24-hour National Hotline-English & Spanish. Provides 60 community-based programs to meet individualized needs and works closely with domestic violence victims and their children.*

*Break the Cycle* • [breakthecycle.org](https://breakthecycle.org) • **866-331-9474** • **Text LOVEIS to 22522**

*Provides a 24/7 peer advocate line or text program to protect teens against dating violence.*

*Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) Hotline* • [pcar.org](https://pcar.org) • **888-772-7227**

*Works to end sexual violence and advocates for the rights and needs of sexual assault victims.*