

Sexual Violence and Healthy Relationships

6 Tips for parents as they navigate the world of dating with their teens:

THE FACTS:

1 in 3 adolescents in the United States is a victim of abuse from a dating partner.

1 in 10 high school students have been purposefully hit, slapped, or otherwise hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend

Data shows that only 33% of teens who experience abuse in a relationship ever tell anyone about the abuse.

THE EFFECTS:

Short term:

Depression
Suicidal thoughts
Anxiety
Alcohol and drug abuse
Other health risk behaviors

Long term:

Decreased self esteem
Poorer academic performance
Eating disorders
Substance abuse and dependence
Poor mental health

THE RESOURCES:

www.loveisrespect.org
www.pinnaclehealth.org
www.julievalentinecenter.org

Consistency is Key. Remember, you are your teens' parent, not their friend. Enforcing the rules and listening to their personal struggles or acknowledging changes in behavior can benefit you both.

Lessons Learned. Draw from your own personal experiences, or what is happening in popular culture at the moment to bridge the age gap, and discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Role Model. Teens are watching what we say and what we do. Think about how you set an example at home, as well as how the other people in your child's life demonstrate respect and compromise in personal and professional situations. When you see something, talk about it.

Stay Positive. Conversations about relationships do not need to focus risky behavior or negative consequences. Conversations can also address factors that promote healthy adolescent development and relationships.

Participate. Find activities to do together that will help build a foundation that makes parenting not so scary or combative when you need time for talk with your teen. Start a weekly check in about teen issues and concerns. The more you talk, the easier the taboo topics will be to discuss.

Accept Mistakes. You and your teen will make them. Still, you need to guide them, enforce the rules, and help them make responsible choices to empower them now and later. It's a balance between showing sensitivity and maintaining authority.

Red Flags for a parent or caregiver to look for when their teen is in a relationship:

- Dropping out of hobbies and extra-curricular activities.
- Drastically changing their appearance
- Spending all their free time with their boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Failing or allowing grades to fall
- Abandoning friends and family.
- Inconsistent behavior and moods
- Sleeping more or less than usual.
- Angry or frequent emotional outbursts and defiance.
- Showing a significant change in appetite or weight
- Lying and sneaking out