



FAQs: **Teen Dating Violence**

What is teen dating violence and how do I know it is happening to me?

Teen Dating Violence can happen to you if you are a teenager (ages 13-19) and you are involved a romantic relationship, or with an intimate partner, who is abusive or violent. Usually, a pattern of abusive behaviors is perpetrated by one person in the relationship to gain power and control over the other partner. Unfortunately, 1 in 3 teens in the U.S. experience some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse.

Some of the warning signs of abusive behavior are when your partner:

- is EXTREMELY jealous.
- limits your time with your friends and your family.
- abuse alcohol or drugs to “deal” with their anger or escape their problems.
- DEMAND sex and affection from you instead of respecting your right to say no.
- threatens physical violence against you or anyone you know.

These are only the beginning! Studies show that, as the relationship gets more serious, abuse and violent behaviors will escalate.

If this is happening to you, please get help! Tell someone you trust about what is happening to you. If you don't feel comfortable telling a friend, parent, or a teacher about the abuse, call Tri-Valley Haven's crisis line at (800) 884-8119 and we will listen and support you. You have a right to be safe!

How do I know if someone is verbally abusing me?

Verbal abuse is when someone intentionally goes out of his or her way to put you down or attack your self esteem. There is no valid reason for it whatsoever. You might be minding your own business or just walking in the door and that person says something offensive or hurtful to you without provocation.

Sure, we all get angry sometimes, and yes, we do say hurtful things. We may raise our voice or say something we didn't mean. In most instances, we have our reasons for getting upset. But if your partner or friend is purposefully calling you names, yelling at you, using excessive cuss words when speaking to you, insults you, puts you down, or is constantly commenting negatively on your looks or clothing, you are being verbally abused!



FAQs: **Teen Dating Violence**

If this is happening to you, talk to someone you trust about the situation. Let that person know what is happening and how it makes you feel. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone you know, call a crisis line or hotline to get the support you need. If you feel comfortable after that, approach the person who is being verbally abusive, either with a friend or on your own — be sure you are in a public place — and tell him or her how that abusive behavior makes you feel. Tell the person to stop verbally abusing you! Remember to remain calm and be assertive.

Someone from school keeps following me around and sending me a lot of text messages; is that considered stalking?

If you feel scared or fearful that this person means to do you harm or hurt you in any way, YES! Stalking is very serious and these types of obsessive behaviors should not be taken lightly!

Stalking behavior includes: harassment, threats, following a person, appearing at a person's home or job, repeated phone calls and text messages, repeated emails or electronic messages (such as on Facebook or MySpace), and vandalism.

First and foremost, tell someone you trust what is happening! Do not keep this a secret. It is so important that you alert someone in case this person tries to hurt you or follows you somewhere else other than school. If you and your parents want to do more, you can go to your school counselor, principal, or local on-campus police officer and address the issue. Filing a report on school grounds is important documentation that you will need if you decide to get a protective order.

Remember, in the state of California, if you are age 12 or over, you have the legal right to pursue a restraining or protective order without the help of a parent or guardian.

Tri-Valley Haven holds weekly legal clinics in the Tri-Valley area that are free and confidential.

What is the difference between sexual harassment and flirting?

Sexual Harassment is any unwanted sexual attention! Basically, any attention that is of a sexual nature that makes someone uncomfortable is sexual harassment. This in-



FAQs: **Teen Dating Violence**

cludes what you say and what you do. Most teens are under the impression that sexual harassment only involves touching someone inappropriately. While it does include touching, it also includes gestures, jokes, letters, posters, pictures, text messages, and even emails. Yes, this includes anything you post on Facebook or MySpace! You may feel like it is funny or just a joke but the other person may feel offended or uncomfortable by the attention. If the person asks you to stop, and you continue with the sexual attention, that is crossing the line!

Flirting, on the other hand, is always mutual! Both parties are enjoying what is going on, no matter what that may be. Kissing, hugging, texting, e-mailing ... it is all OK as long as both parties are into what is going on. If you aren't sure if the other person is OK with the attention or you're not sure if you can take it to the next level, ASK! "Are you ok with this?" or "Would you like me to stop?"

On the flip side, if you LIKE the flirting that's going on, let the other person know that too! "I like this." Or "I am really having fun!" You don't want play a guessing game. Never be afraid to tell someone how you feel, whether that is good or bad. **SPEAK UP! SHOW RESPECT.**

What does a healthy relationship look like?

Most importantly, in a healthy relationship you feel safe, respected, and happy. Also, there is a balance of alone/together time and you are never made to feel guilty about spending time with your friends or family.

Every relationship needs balance. Sometimes it is difficult to find that balance. Even healthy couples argue and have disagreements. The difference is that in a healthy relationship there is a mutual respect for each other's opinions, wants, needs, and bodies. You want what's best for your partner and you always want to bring out the best in each other!



FAQs: **Teen Dating Violence**
