

# LOVE IS NOT ABUSE

A TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE PREVENTION CURRICULUM  
HIGH SCHOOL EDITION

LIZ CLAIBORNE INC  
A PORTFOLIO OF BRANDS

**LOVE  
IS NOT  
ABUSE**

SINCE 1991 LIZ CLAIBORNE INC.

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This curriculum was created by Liz Claiborne Inc. in conjunction with Education Development Center, Inc., an international, non-profit organization that focuses on education and health; Break the Cycle, a non-profit organization that works to prevent domestic and dating violence; WiredSafety.org, the world's largest and oldest non-profit cyber safety organization; and the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), the leading voice for domestic violence victims and their advocates.

Select handouts were developed with input from the following organizations:

**Break the Cycle**, a national non-profit organization that engages, educates, and empowers youth to end domestic violence. For more information, **visit [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org)**.

**loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline** a national 24-hour resource that can be accessed by phone or internet, specifically designed for teens and young adults. For more information, **visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)** or call 1-866-331-9474 or 1-866-331-8453 TTY.

**The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)**, a social change organization working to end violence against women. For more information, **visit [nedv.org](http://nedv.org)**.

**Safe Horizon**, a non-profit organization that works in New York City's five boroughs to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families, and communities. For more information, **visit [safehorizon.org](http://safehorizon.org)**.

**WiredSafety**, an internet safety non-profit organization that operates worldwide in cyberspace. For more information, **visit [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org)**.

**Teenangels**, a peer expert and help group on cyber safety and digital responsibility run by WiredSafety teen volunteers. For more information, **visit [teenangels.org](http://teenangels.org)**.

Additional copies of this curriculum can be ordered online from our website, along with handbooks and videos for adults, teenagers, and caregivers on domestic violence and dating abuse, by visiting, **[loveisnotabuse.com](http://loveisnotabuse.com)**.

The background of the page is a solid orange color. On the right side, there are two white rectangular shapes. The top one is a smaller square, and the one below it is a taller, narrower rectangle. They are positioned in the upper right quadrant of the page.

**INTRODUCTION:  
THE LOVE IS NOT ABUSE  
CURRICULUM**

# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

It is during their teenage years – when they are no longer children, but not yet adults – that many young people begin to form their first romantic relationships. Yet without an understanding of healthy and unhealthy behaviors in dating relationships, teens are especially susceptible to becoming targets of dating violence and abuse. Consider this: nearly 1 in 3 teens who have been in a dating relationship report actual sexual abuse, physical abuse, or threats of physical abuse.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 1 in 4 have been victimized through technology, and nearly 1 in 2 teens in relationships report being controlled, threatened, and pressured to do things they did not want to do.<sup>2</sup>

Defined as a pattern of physically, sexually, verbally, and/or emotionally abusive behavior or privacy intrusions in a dating relationship, dating abuse takes many forms. It ranges from punching, slapping, pushing, and grabbing to rape and murder; from threats of violence, verbal attacks, and other forms of intimidation to extreme jealousy, possessiveness, and controlling behavior. Dating violence and abuse is designed to be isolating and controlling, taking different forms at different times and limited only by the energy and desperation of the abuser.

In the online environment, it can be anonymous, with the abusers hiding behind fake, stolen, or impersonated accounts and screen names. It can involve spying and digital tracking of communications and online activities. It can mean using technology (cell phones, social networking sites, etc.) to stay in constant contact. No matter the form digital abuse takes, the effect on teen victims is that no place feels private. No place feels safe.

Dating abuse and domestic violence are typically not one-time incidents, but a pattern of abusive behaviors over time that cause fear and/or harm. As the pattern continues, the abuser uses emotional manipulation and/or physical domination to gain control and power over his or her partner.

Teen dating violence and abuse does not discriminate. It affects young people of all races, religions, ages, sexual orientations, genders, and cultures. It affects all teens regardless of how much money they have or what neighborhood they live in. While the vast majority of abusers are male and most targets (also known as victims or survivors) are female, females, too, can be abusers and males can be targets of dating abuse and violence.

Abuse in relationships can be a difficult topic for anyone to talk about, especially young men. Because dating violence and abuse have traditionally been considered “women’s issues,” many young men feel as if they have no positive, proactive way to help stop it – let alone ask for the help they might need as either the target or the abuser.

The bottom line is this: Everyone must get involved in preventing abuse and have a better understanding of the resources available to those who are involved in such abuse in order to help and support them.

1 Liz Claiborne Inc./Family Violence Prevention Fund Survey, 2009.  
2 Liz Claiborne Inc./Family Violence Prevention Fund Survey, 2009.

# OVERVIEW OF THE LOVE IS NOT ABUSE CURRICULUM

This curriculum focuses on four critical goals:

1. Increasing students' understanding of teen dating abuse
2. Enabling students to reach out to provide support and help to a friend or family member who may be involved in an abusive relationship
3. Increasing help-seeking behavior among students involved in abusive dating relationships
4. Promoting healthier approaches to dating relationships and conflicts

The curriculum is broken down into four lessons (45 minutes each) with handouts and activities specific to each lesson's theme:

**LESSON 1: WHAT IS DATING ABUSE?**

**LESSON 2: THE PATTERN OF ABUSE IN DATING VIOLENCE**

**LESSON 3: DIGITAL ABUSE IN DATING VIOLENCE**

**LESSON 4: ENDING TEEN DATING ABUSE**

Love Is Not Abuse blends literacy with health education. It draws on the motivating power of literature to build students' reading, interpretation, and writing skills, and introduces skills for preventing and responding to dating abuse. It will help inspire change and empower healthier approaches, using real stories of real teens that have faced dating abuse. The texts that are featured in this curriculum offer many opportunities for students to hone literacy skills, and they represent a variety of genres, including fiction, poetry, and autobiographical essays. Additionally, video and multimedia resources help deliver a teen voice to the students. These can be found on [loveisnotabuse.com](http://loveisnotabuse.com).

Developed for English language arts, health education classrooms, and technology and cyber safety classes, Love Is Not Abuse is designed to meet both English language arts and health education standards and provide resources that can contribute to a cyber ethics and cyber safety curricula. Love Is Not Abuse includes the following elements:

- **HIGH-QUALITY LITERATURE**
- **SMALL-AND LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSION MATERIALS**
- **STEP-BY-STEP, EASY-TO-FOLLOW PROCEDURES**
- **DETAILED BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR EDUCATORS**

## BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2005, a draft of Love Is Not Abuse was tested in high schools across the United States, representing a range of urban, suburban and rural communities. Pilot teachers used the curriculum across a variety of subject areas, including health education, English language arts, family and consumer science, and life management skills classes. The experiences and recommendations of the pilot-test classrooms were reflected in the curriculum that was released broadly in spring 2006. A second edition of the curriculum was updated to incorporate information on the prevalence of technology and cyber abuse in teen dating relationships and provided additional resources for teens, teachers, and parents to get

help. This third edition has been expanded to include a lesson that specifically addresses digital dating abuse, including the more recent phenomenon of “sexting.”

Despite its prevalence, dating abuse remains hidden and is not being talked about by teens and their parents/caregivers. In fact, Liz Claiborne Inc.’s 2009 research on teen dating abuse has indicated that the majority of parents/caregivers (58%) could not correctly identify all the warning signs of abuse. As such, we have included a handout for parents/caregivers concerning this issue. Distribution of this element is at your discretion, though it is often a great way to get parents and caregivers to understand this is something they do need to address with their teens.

## **COLLABORATING TO TEACH LOVE IS NOT ABUSE**

We encourage language arts, health education and technology teachers, or library media specialists to collaborate with reading specialists, family and consumer sciences teachers, peer-counseling facilitators, guidance counselors, health care professionals and/or teachers of other disciplines. Teaching the curriculum as a team becomes easier to manage and coordinate over time. These issues span a number of disciplines and team teaching can be an effective way of approaching the topics in a holistic manner.

Many schools draw on staff from community-based domestic violence programs to facilitate lessons on teen dating abuse and violence. These and other experts (law enforcement, attorneys, cyber safety, etc.) can participate in implementing Love Is Not Abuse in two ways: as the lead facilitator of the curriculum in the classroom or as a support to the classroom teacher, sharing information and community resources.

It is important for school staff to be prepared for some students to disclose dating abuse experiences after learning and discussing this issue. Before implementing Love Is Not Abuse, educators should also inform their school’s guidance counselors, adjustment counselors, social workers, psychologists, and administrators. It may be helpful to distribute the Teacher Background Information at the end of Lesson 1 to all faculty and staff and provide information to parents and caregivers in advance of beginning the program. If possible, materials for peers should be shared with all students, not only those in the program.

As a school prepares to implement Love Is Not Abuse, and to distribute materials, state law and school policy should be consulted for guidance on confidentiality protections and mandated reporting requirements. Before raising issues that may prompt students to confide in others, check and see, if there is a school district policy on safety, harassment or cyber bullying issues and on how to handle sensitive discussions and reports of abuse or threats. To that end, students should be advised about the required disclosures and processes before they confide sensitive information to school professionals, in order to maintain the students’ trust.

Because this curriculum deals with delicate issues related to teen dating abuse, and students discuss these issues in small and large groups, it is critical that the teacher/facilitator create a safe environment by establishing guidelines for class discussion before beginning the

lessons. Lesson 1 contains recommended guidelines for class discussion, including strongly reminding students that if they choose to take the discussion outside of the classroom or online, they need to be respectful of their peers. In other words, what is said in the classroom stays in the classroom.

When possible, it can be beneficial to teach this curriculum in the context of a longer unit on healthy relationships, so that students are clear about healthy dating behaviors. Teachers may also want to share the following information on “Creating a School-Wide Teen Dating/Digital Dating Abuse Prevention Program” with school administrators to raise their awareness of dating abuse issues and enlist their support in creating a broader initiative to help stem the tide of teen dating abuse. To the extent that the digital dating abuse issues involve sexting, cyber bullying and cyber harassment, they blend well with more general teen cyber safety initiatives and programs. Check the resources section starting on page (11) for organizations that can provide information on creating awareness campaigns in schools.

## **CREATING A SCHOOLWIDE TEEN DATING ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

As part of a comprehensive approach to health and safety, Love Is Not Abuse can be a springboard to starting a schoolwide teen dating abuse prevention program. The following are potential additional steps toward developing a schoolwide program:

- **Review and revise school policies related to dating abuse and domestic violence, focusing on keeping students safe.** School policies should address the safety and well-being of targets of dating abuse and violence, consequences for abusers, procedures in the event of a restraining order, procedures for students to ask for help and to report violence they witness or know about, and connect students to community dating abuse resources. Consider instituting a policy addressing inappropriate use of technology (e.g. cell phones, e-mail, text-messaging, social networking websites) to control, intimidate or bully other people. For information about creating a dating abuse response policy in your school or district, contact Break the Cycle by visiting [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org).
- **Raise awareness about teen dating abuse and violence in your school.** Educate the faculty, staff, parents and caregivers about the issue and how to respond to students seeking help. Encourage other teachers to address dating abuse in the classroom. Conduct a presentation during a meeting of your school’s parent-teacher association. Hold assemblies about the issue. Organize a student art exhibit or an essay or poetry contest on teen dating abuse and violence. Include articles in newsletters, on the school website and in flyers and emails to parents/caregivers. Point parents, caregivers, and community groups to the [loveisnotabuse.com](http://loveisnotabuse.com) website and other resources.
- **Make it clear that your campus is a safe place and students are allowed – and encouraged – to talk about dating abuse at school.** Put up posters and flyers around campus to educate students about the issue and publicize local resources. Invite staff from a local domestic violence organization to speak to students, staff, and/or parents/caregivers. Facilitate students’ production of peer-to-peer awareness materials written in their own language, sharing the message and promoting awareness.

- **Start a peer education group.** Teens that experience dating abuse are more likely to tell their friends than anyone else. Peer educators can be trained to teach other students about the issue and/or to co-facilitate (with an adult) groups that focus on healthy relationships. Peer education groups can be a great source of support, while also being a positive, powerful influence. However, it is not the peer educators' role to counsel and "rescue" targets from abuse. Instead, they can encourage targets to talk to people who can provide help and guidance.
- **Make students aware of the anonymous, secure, and easily-accessible loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline. Resources and services are available 24/7 online at [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) or by calling 1-866-331-9474 or 1-866-331-8453 TTY.**
- **Hold a school-wide contest.** Create a poster, video, or multi-media resource to spread awareness about dating abuse. Visit [thatsnotcool.com/tools](http://thatsnotcool.com/tools) or [athinline.org](http://athinline.org).
- **Host A MOST club at your school.** Men Can Stop Rape trains male facilitators to host Men Of Strength Clubs that encourage young men to learn about healthy masculinity and re-defining male strength. As most abusers are male, reaching out to the boys in your school is a great violence prevention tool. Visit [mencanstoprape.org](http://mencanstoprape.org) for more info.

**CONTACT INFO:** If you have questions about how to handle a dating abuse-related situation with a student, please contact the National Dating Abuse Helpline at 1.866.331.9474 or 1.866.331.8453 (TTY) or [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org). If you would like to speak to someone about starting a program at your school, contact Break the Cycle at [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org).

If you have questions about cyber harassment, youth cyber ethics and safety, contact [teenangels.org](http://teenangels.org). If you need help handling a cyber bullying situation, contact the online helpline at [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org). Additional information can also be accessed through the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), [nnedv.org](http://nnedv.org).

## VIDEO SUPPLEMENTS

In response to feedback from teachers and advocates, we have created and added videos to supplement the lessons in the curriculum. The first supplement consists of four distinct videos featuring young women giving first-hand accounts of the teen dating abuse they experienced in their own lives. The second supplement, which was added with permission from MTV's A Thin Line campaign, provides access to Public Service Announcements (PSAs), as well as, an MTV News Special called "Sexting in America" that would complement the new lesson specifically on digital dating abuse. These are both powerful tools that reinforce much of the content presented throughout the curriculum.

A few of the experiences discussed in the videos involve teen use of alcohol and/or teen

pregnancy; therefore, we strongly suggest that you view the videos and determine which may be most appropriate for your classroom and students. If you do choose to use those videos, you may also want to consider inviting a teen dating abuse/domestic violence expert, guidance counselor, or mental health professional to join the class that day to help answer any sensitive questions that may arise.

You received a link to the videos upon ordering this curriculum. The videos can also be accessed at:

- [loveisnotabuse.com/video\\_supplement](https://loveisnotabuse.com/video_supplement)
- [athinline.org/videos](https://athinline.org/videos)

Below are brief overviews of the four distinct videos featuring young women, as well as suggested discussion guides.

## ANYA

Anya describes two experiences with dating abuse, both occurring in brief relationships where the boyfriends' abusive behavior surfaced quickly. She provides several examples of how her boyfriends tried to control her appearance and her social life, and how they belittled her by calling her names. She explains why she didn't recognize this behavior as abusive, and why she finally broke off the relationships. Anya also suggests a few warning signs for friends or family.

### DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Introduce the video to students and let them know this is a personal story of a survivor. Emphasize the discussion ground rules again. [See Lesson 1: Teaching Tip (A)]

Show the video of Anya.

Ask the following questions for class discussion:

1. Was Anya a target of dating abuse? Why or why not?
  - Her boyfriends belittled her by calling her names
  - They tried to control her hairstyles, clothing, social life
  - They constantly checked up on her
2. What are some signs that her friends or family might see?
  - Changes in her clothing, hairstyle
  - Drop in grades
  - Not doing favorite activities
  - Not seeing close friends
3. What were the barriers to Anya recognizing that her boyfriends' behavior was abusive?
  - She didn't see her boyfriends' behavior as a "problem"
  - She was ashamed to be in this kind of relationship
  - She wants to be able to make her own decisions
  - She was "in denial"
  - Summarize – She thought it was "normal jealousy" in a dating relationship

Jealousy is not a sign of love or affection. Jealousy, more often than not, is a sign of insecurity. Because controlling behaviors are often confused with affection it can be difficult for the

target to see the behavior as abusive, or he/she may be too afraid or ashamed to recognize the behaviors as abusive.

Consider mentioning that a target may, in fact, realize that the boyfriend's behavior is abusive, but stays in the relationship because she feels there is no other option, or to protect herself or someone close to her.

4. Why did Anya finally end these relationships?

- She didn't like the way she felt
- Her friends helped her recognize the abusive behavior

Discuss parallels between Anya's experience and Adaliz's experience (in Lesson 1) and how these experiences affected them. Reinforce the concept that controlling behaviors are abusive, even if there is no physical violence.

Point out that ending an abusive relationship can be especially difficult and dangerous. Anya was wise to meet her first boyfriend in a public place. Emphasize the importance of making a safety plan and talking to someone (parent, friend, counselor) who can help.

It is tempting to assume that the easy "solution" to an abusive relationship is simply to end it. However, ending abusive relationships can be extremely difficult—and even worse—dangerous. It is important to be sensitive to why individuals may have trouble breaking free from abusive relationships, or even reaching out for help.

## NICCI

Nicci experienced severe physical violence in her first romantic relationship. Like Anya, Nicci also describes the ways her boyfriend tried to control her behavior and manipulate her emotions. She provides graphic detail of the violent incident, which occurred while she and her boyfriend were watching a movie with friends. Ultimately, Nicci's parents helped her get a protective order and led her toward counseling.

Nicci's story may help students think about why it was so hard for Nicci to recognize her boyfriend's behavior as abusive. Her experience also raises questions about the role of her friends, who were bystanders to the violence but play no part in Nicci's narrative. You may want to review background information about protective orders, which is provided at the end of this curriculum.

### DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Introduce the video to students and let them know this is a personal story of a survivor. Emphasize the discussion ground rules again. [See Lesson 1: Teaching Tip (A)]

Show video of Nicci.

Ask the following questions for class discussion:

1. If you were one of the friends watching the movie, what could you have done to help Nicci? What would you have done during or after the incident?

- Try to talk to the boyfriend before he became physically violent
- Call the police

## 2. After the incident?

- Encourage Nicci to speak with a trusted adult; seek counseling and protection
- Help her boyfriend to recognize his behaviors as abusive
- Talk to a trusted adult about any feelings of helplessness or confusion you may have experienced in witnessing this abuse

Compare and contrast these suggestions with the strategies that were suggested for Ethan (in Lesson 4).

**IMPORTANT:** Students should be discouraged from attempting to physically intervene with a violent individual. Rather, police should be contacted regardless of other circumstances (such as presence of alcohol or drugs). Protecting people from physical harm is always the first priority.

## SARAH

Sarah describes serious physical incidents that occurred at school and at a party where drugs and alcohol were present. She confided in her mother, who called the police, leading to a stint in juvenile hall for Sarah's boyfriend. As a result, Sarah was vilified by her friends to such an extent that she changed schools and found a support network elsewhere. While the bottom line is that there is never any excuse for abusive behavior and blame should only ever be placed on the abuser, Sarah's story raises questions about the role of drugs and alcohol in violent behavior, and the inhibiting effect these illegal activities may have on teens' willingness to report violent incidents. It also reveals the potential consequences of calling police and following through with the criminal justice process. In telling her story, Sarah appears confident that she made the right choice.

Background information about the criminal justice system is provided at the end of this curriculum. You may want to seek the assistance of an advocate from a local domestic violence organization or criminal justice agency before using Sarah's story in the classroom and invite them in as a guest speaker.

### DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Introduce the video to students and let them know this is a personal story of a survivor. Emphasize the discussion ground rules again. [See Lesson 1: Teaching Tip (A)]

Sarah's video raises some important issues, such as drugs and alcohol, that are not explicitly addressed elsewhere in the curriculum. It is strongly recommended that a representative from a local community-based domestic violence program or a victim advocate from a local law enforcement agency be invited to assist in the discussion of Sarah's experience.

Show the video of Sarah.

Ask the following questions for class discussion:

1. Does being under the influence of drugs or alcohol excuse a person's abusive behavior?
  - If Sarah was drinking or using drugs at the party, does she share some of the responsibility for the violent incident?
  - How might the involvement of drugs and alcohol affect the behavior of others at the party who were bystanders to the abuse?
  - Does the involvement of drugs and alcohol prevent teens from talking with a trusted adult about abuse?
  - Who else could Sarah turn to if she felt she was not able to talk to her parents?

2. Emphasize that abuse is unacceptable no matter what the circumstances. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs does not excuse any form of dating violence, nor does a target's use of alcohol or drugs justify the abuser's violence.

Underscore the importance of talking with a trusted adult (family member, counselor) or supportive friends about dating violence, even if it occurs under circumstances like Sarah's.

3. Was reporting to the police, and following through with the courts, the best thing for Sarah to do?
  - What were the consequences for her?
  - What were the consequences for her boyfriend?
  - Weighing the pros and cons of Sarah's situation, what would students in her situation do?
  - What would be the possible consequences of doing nothing?

The justice system is an essential tool for many targets of dating violence. [If the other video excerpts were used, point out that Anya threatened to get a restraining order against her abusive boyfriend, and Nicci's parents helped her get a protective order against her boyfriend.] Although Sarah had to change schools and make new friends, she was safe from physical harm and overcame her fear of her boyfriend's violence.

## ALISA

**Alisa talks about a long-term relationship in which controlling and manipulative behavior escalates to physical violence. She provides details about a particular incident in which her boyfriend pushed, choked and punched her. Alisa describes her feelings about her boyfriend — minimizing the abuse, forgiving him, and continuing to love him.**

Alisa and her boyfriend have a child together who witnesses the violence. Alisa expresses concern for her little girl even as she professes her love for her boyfriend as the father of her child.

Alisa's experience touches on a sensitive question: How best to protect children who are exposed to domestic violence? You should be aware that this is an extremely contentious issue in many communities. Before using this video in class, you should review the background information at the end of the curriculum and consult advocates from domestic violence organizations in the community. You may also want to invite them in as a guest speaker.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Introduce the video to students and let them know this is a personal story of a survivor. Emphasize the discussion ground rules again. [See Lesson 1: Teaching Tip (A)] It is recommended that a social worker or child advocate be invited to assist in the discussion of Alisa's experience. She raises important issues about the effects of witnessing violence on young children.

Show the video of Alisa.

Ask the following questions for class discussion:

1. Why is Alisa concerned about her daughter?
  - The child would be frightened
  - The boyfriend might become violent with her, too
  - The child may get inadvertently harmed during an abusive incident
  - The child may suffer long-term effects related to being exposed to abuse
2. How does having a child together affect Alisa's feelings toward her boyfriend?
  - She diminishes the severity of the abuse
  - She still loves him: "He's my daughter's father."
  - The father still may provide for the daughter, e.g., food, clothing, shelter
3. How does the daughter affect Alisa's decision making?
  - She didn't want the child to see the fighting and abuse
  - She felt unable to call police even when she had the chance because her boyfriend is the child's father

Children of abused mothers may be at higher risk of being abused or abusing. Even if they are not physically harmed, they frequently suffer emotionally from witnessing the violence in their homes.

Parents are responsible for the welfare of their children. There are resources in the community to help abused children, and these resources should be coordinated with the resources for teens that experience dating violence.

## QUESTIONS:

- Why should Alisa be concerned about her daughter?
- What is the boyfriend's responsibility toward their daughter?
- What resources are available to help teen mothers and their children?

Teachers can refer to page 70 of the curriculum for information on the impact upon children who witness violence and interventions to support children and their mothers.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY/RESOURCES

There are many excellent resources on teen dating abuse and domestic violence. Listed below are some recommended resources for educators.

## NONFICTION

Anderson, Vera (1997). *A woman like you: The face of domestic violence*. Seattle: Seal Press.

Family Violence Prevention Fund and Warm2Kids (2005). *Coaching boys into men playbook*. San Francisco: Family Violence Prevention Fund.

Levy, Barrie, ed. (1998). *Dating violence: Young women in danger*. Seattle: Seal Press.

Lipper, Joanna (2003). *Growing up fast*. New York: Picador.

Liz Claiborne Inc. *A parent's guide to teen dating violence: Questions to start the conversation*. New York: Liz Claiborne Inc.

Liz Claiborne Inc. *A parent's handbook: How to talk to your children about developing healthy relationships*. New York: Liz Claiborne Inc.

Liz Claiborne Inc. *Research Topline: Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study*. New York: Liz Claiborne Inc.

Liz Claiborne Inc. *Tough talk: What boys need to know about relationship abuse*. New York: Liz Claiborne Inc.

Liz Claiborne Inc. *What you need to know about dating violence: A teen's handbook*. New York: Liz Claiborne Inc.

Miles, Al (2005). *Ending violence in teen dating relationships: A resource guide for parents and pastors*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Books.

Murray, Jill (2000). *But I love him: Protecting your teen daughter from controlling, abusive dating relationships*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Murray, Jill (2007). *But he never hit me: The devastating cost of non-physical abuse to girls and women*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Silverman, Jay G.; Raj, Anita; Mucci, Lorelei A.; Hathaway, Jeanne E. (2001). *Dating violence against adolescent girls and associated substance use, unhealthy weight control, sexual risk behavior, pregnancy, and suicidality*. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 286 (5)572-579.

Stein, Nan and Capello, Dominic (1999). *Gender violence/gender justice: An interdisciplinary teaching guide for teachers of English, literature, social studies,*

psychology, health, peer counseling, and family and consumer sciences. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

Weiss, Elaine (2004). *Surviving domestic violence: Voices of women who broke free*. Volcano, Calif.: Volcano Press.

## FICTION

Dessen, Sarah (2000). *Dreamland*. New York: Puffin Books.

Flinn, Alex (2001). *Breathing Underwater*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Turner, Tina, with Kurt Loder (1986). *I, Tina*. New York: Avon Books.

## WEBSITES

[www.loveisnotabuse.com](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com) Love Is Not Abuse is a program of Liz Claiborne Inc. that provides information and tools that men, women, children, teens, and corporate executives can use to learn about domestic and dating violence and how they can help end the epidemic.

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) National Dating Abuse Helpline provides 24/7 access to information and services. 1.866.331.9474 / 1.866.331.8453 (TTY).

[www.acalltomen.org](http://www.acalltomen.org) A Call to Men is a leading national men's organization addressing domestic and sexual violence prevention and the promotion of healthy manhood. It is committed to maintaining strong partnerships with women's organizations already doing this important work. It helps to organize communities in order to raise awareness and get men involved in this effort.

[www.atask.org](http://www.atask.org) The Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Inc., is a coalition that aims to eliminate family violence and to strengthen Asian families and communities.

[www.athinline.org](http://www.athinline.org) MTV's initiative to empower America's youth to identify, respond to and stop the spread of digital abuse.

[www.austin-safeplace.org](http://www.austin-safeplace.org) Safe Place works to end sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing and prevention for individuals and the community in Austin, Texas. SafePlace's Expect Respect Program builds healthy relationships for youth.

[www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org) Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Program helps children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with measurable impact.

[www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org) Break the Cycle, Inc., is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage, educate, and empower youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datingmatters.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datingmatters.html) Dating Matters: Understanding Teen Dating Violence Prevention is a 60-minute, interactive training session designed to help educators, youth-serving organizations, and others working with teens understand the risk factors and warning signs associated with teen dating violence. The training was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in partnership with Liz Claiborne Inc.

[www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/youthviolence/) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention online resource for violence prevention.

[www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org) Outlines ChildHelp USA's programs and services, supplies hotline numbers and local contacts, and provides information for children and teens about abuse.

[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org) Provides access to Children Now publications, poll results, policy papers, press materials, and updates on federal and state legislation.

[www.darkness2light.org](http://www.darkness2light.org) Darkness to Light works to shift responsibility for preventing child sexual abuse from children to adults, and to reduce child sexual abuse nationally through awareness and education.

[www.dayoneny.org](http://www.dayoneny.org) Day One provides preventive education and direct legal services to young people, and technical assistance to professionals, related to teen dating abuse and violence.

[www.deanaseducationaltheater.org](http://www.deanaseducationaltheater.org) Deana's Educational Theater is an arts-based organization that develops and produces educational theater and other programs to promote healthy relationships.

[www.dvinstitute.org](http://www.dvinstitute.org) Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community provides a forum for identifying appropriate and effective responses to prevent/reduce family violence in the African American community.

[www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org) The Family Violence Prevention Fund is a national non-profit organization that focuses on domestic violence education, prevention, and public policy reform.

[www.fvlc.org/rap](http://www.fvlc.org/rap) Family Violence Law Center Relationship Abuse Prevention Project educates middle and high school youth as well as parents, educators, adolescent health care providers, and youth service workers about the dynamics of domestic and dating violence.

[www.girlsinc.org](http://www.girlsinc.org) Girls Incorporated National Resource Center provides research, advocacy information, and tips on issues related to girls and young women.

[www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org) Men Can Stop Rape mobilizes male youth to prevent men's violence against women. It builds young men's capacity to challenge harmful aspects of traditional masculinity, to value alternative visions of male strength, and to embrace their vital role as allies with women and girls in fostering healthy relationships and gender equity.

[www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org) The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence website posts information on events, provides links and resources, and offers information and a 24-hour hotline on how to get help.

[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) provides information and resources to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized youth, their families, and communities throughout the United States.

[www.ncvc.org/dvrc](http://www.ncvc.org/dvrc) The National Center for Victims of Crime's Dating Violence Resource Center provides training, resources, and information to increase awareness of and commitment to addressing dating violence.

[www.ncvc.org/src](http://www.ncvc.org/src) The National Center for Victims of Crime's Stalking Resource Center provides training, resources, and information to increase awareness of and commitment to addressing stalking, including abusive use of high-tech devices.

[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org) The 24-hour, toll-free National Domestic Violence Hotline links individuals to help in their area using a nationwide database and offers information on local domestic violence shelters, other emergency shelters, legal advocacy and assistance programs, and social service programs.

[www.neahin.org](http://www.neahin.org) NEA Health Information Network, the non-profit health affiliate of the National Education Association, provides health information on topics of concern to educators and students.

[www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org) The National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project provides training, resources, and information about ways abusers are misusing technology to abuse, stalk, and terrorize, and how survivors can use technology strategically to respond to these crimes.

[www.nrcdv.org](http://www.nrcdv.org) The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence provides technical assistance, training, and information on the response to, and prevention of, domestic violence.

[www.peaceoverviolence.org](http://www.peaceoverviolence.org) Peace Over Violence is a social service agency dedicated to building healthy relationships, families, and communities free from sexual, domestic, and interpersonal violence.

[www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org) The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center is a Federal resource for communities working to prevent violence committed by and against young people.

[www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org) The American School Counselor Association supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. ASCA provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to professional school counselors around the globe.

[www.safehorizon.org](http://www.safehorizon.org) Safe Horizon works in New York City's five boroughs to provide support, prevent violence, and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families, and communities.

[www.startstrongteens.org](http://www.startstrongteens.org) Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships is a national initiative funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to stop teen dating abuse before it starts.

[www.sportinsociety.org/mvp](http://www.sportinsociety.org/mvp) The Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program is a leadership program that motivates student-athletes and student leaders to play a central role in addressing rape, battering, and sexual harassment.

[www.stopcyberbullying.org](http://www.stopcyberbullying.org) A website devoted to cyber bullying issues, run by WiredSafety.

[www.tascorp.org](http://www.tascorp.org) The After-School Corporation provides grants, training, and assistance to community-based organizations in New York City that run after-school programs.

[www.teensagainstabuse.org](http://www.teensagainstabuse.org) Teens Experiencing Abusive Relationships (TEAR) is a teen-run organization that works with schools and organizations to educate people about teen dating violence.

[www.teenangels.org](http://www.teenangels.org) A website run by a group of teen cyber safety experts to help teen cyberabuse victims and spread awareness.

[www.thatsnotcool.com](http://www.thatsnotcool.com) That's Not Cool is a multi-media campaign developed by the Family Violence Prevention Fund in collaboration with others to help young people "draw their digital line" against disrespectful and controlling behavior.

[www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org) A project of Break the Cycle, thesafespace.org is a comprehensive online dating abuse resource for teens with access to help, information, and activism opportunities.

[www.wiredsafety.org](http://www.wiredsafety.org) Originated by a group of volunteers, this website provides one-to-one help, extensive information, and education to cyberspace users of all ages on a wide range of internet and interactive technology safety issues. WiredSafety.org houses the cyber harassment helpline run by the charity. It provides online support for victims of cyber harassment, cyber bullying and stalking.

[www.womenslaw.org](http://www.womenslaw.org) Provides easy-to-understand legal information to women living with or escaping domestic violence.

[www.youthoverviolence.org](http://www.youthoverviolence.org) Youth Over Violence empowers teens to end violence and abuse.

An abstract graphic consisting of a teal background with a white, curved, rectangular cutout shape on the left side, resembling a stylized letter 'C' or a partial 'E'.

**LESSON 1:**  
**WHAT IS DATING ABUSE?**

**PURPOSE:** To understand what teen dating abuse is and how young people are affected by it.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- define vocabulary related to dating abuse and apply it to the text and to their own experiences
- identify the forms of dating abuse
- understand the roles of abuser, target, and bystander in teen dating abuse
- describe steps that a bystander can take to help someone who is a target of dating abuse

## MATERIALS

- Read “Teacher Background Information: Teen Dating Abuse” (appears later in this lesson) before teaching this lesson
- Photocopy “I Thought Things Would Change” excerpt for all students
- Photocopy “What Is Teen Dating Abuse?” for all students
- Prepare a transparency of “Roles in Dating Abuse: Abuser, Target, and Bystander”
- Photocopy “Helping a Friend or Family Member Who Is Being Abused” for all students
- Photocopy “A Letter to Parents/Caregivers on Teen Dating Abuse” for all students

## TEACHING TIPS

- (A)** Because this curriculum deals with sensitive issues related to dating abuse, it is critical to create a safe environment in the classroom. If you have not already established guidelines for class discussion, please do so before beginning this lesson. Here are some examples of recommended guidelines:
- Everyone is allowed to express his or her opinion without interruption.
  - Respect each point of view, even if it is different from yours.
  - No question or questioner is stupid or wrong; no put-downs are allowed. Treat other people in the class respectfully.
  - What students say in the classroom should be kept confidential and not discussed outside the classroom or shared with others.
- (B)** It is likely that there are one or more students in every high school classroom who are perpetrators of dating abuse (i.e., abusers) and one or more who are targets of dating abuse. This curriculum may be especially challenging for them as well as for students who have experienced child sexual abuse or rape, or who are bystanders to physical or sexual violence in their homes. See “**Teacher Background Information: Teen Dating Abuse**” at the end of this lesson for responding when students reach out for help. Also be aware that, before implementing this curriculum, you should review your state’s mandatory reporting laws and your school’s policy on mandatory reporting. Visit [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org) for assistance with these issues.
- (C)** Many students who are not abusers or targets of dating abuse are bystanders to it. Bystanders play a critical role in preventing and reducing teenage dating abuse. Friends may be used by an abuser to further harm or gain access to a target, often without the friend’s full knowledge of the situation.
- (D)** Mention to the class that this curriculum will provide everyone with helpful information and skills to apply now or in the future to reduce dating abuse. Emphasize that teen dating abuse is an issue for us all. Working together, we can have an impact.
- (E)** This curriculum uses the term “target” to refer to individuals who experience abuse or violence at the hand of someone they are dating. We chose this term instead of “victim,” which can have a connotation of passive suffering.
- (F)** If students become very engaged in discussing the issues that this curriculum raises, you may want to extend the unit from four class periods to five or six class periods.
- (G)** In this curriculum, students write in their journals as part of some of the classroom activities and homework assignments. Be sure to tell students whether you plan to collect and read their journals.

Mandated reporting laws vary in every state and school district. Be sure you are aware

of your reporting responsibilities before you begin teaching this subject in the classroom. See **“Teacher Background Information: Teen Dating Abuse”** at the end of this lesson for more information on this topic.

## ACTIVITIES

### STEP ONE (15 minutes)

Discuss dating abuse and the many forms it takes.

- Tell students that you are going to read aloud an excerpt from an autobiographical essay.
- Explain that they will follow along as you read.
- Give each student a copy of the **“I Thought Things Would Change”** excerpt.
- Read the handout aloud.
- Ask students what they think the excerpt is about.
- Mention that the class is starting a new unit on dating abuse, which is a theme in this excerpt.
- Ask students what they think of when they hear the phrase “teen dating abuse.” As students brainstorm, record each response on the board.
- Offer a definition of teen dating abuse that includes students’ responses, for example, “Teen dating abuse is a pattern of physically, sexually, verbally and/or emotionally abusive or controlling behavior in a dating relationship.”
- Ask students for examples of dating abuse behaviors. Prompt them to consider the different ways this abuse can occur (face-to-face, through technology like cell phones, instant messages or websites, using another person to convey messages or carry out actions, intimidation, pressure to engage in sexual activities they may not be ready for/want to participate in).
- Give each student a copy of **“What Is Teen Dating Abuse?”** Review the handout.
- Explain that while many more adolescent females than males are physically abused by someone they are dating, teen males do experience dating abuse and violence also (especially digital dating abuse). Boys and girls may be involved in relationships that are abusive or unhealthy for both partners. Mention that dating abuse affects people of all races, religions, cultures, genders and sexual orientations regardless of how much money they have or the neighborhood they live in.
- Explore with students how dating abuse feels by asking:
  - What forms of dating abuse did Adaliz experience?
  - How did Adaliz feel when Richard was being abusive to her? How does Richard’s abuse affect Adaliz’s day-to-day life? What evidence of this can you find in the text?

- Emphasize that dating abuse is never the fault of the person who is being abused. Nothing this person says, does, believes or wears caused the abuse or gives anyone the right to hurt her or him.
- If students question why abusers hurt their targets, explain that abusers use physical, sexual, verbal/emotional, and digital abuse to control the target. Violence is a learned behavior that is shaped by observation, experience, culture, family and community. There is never an excuse for violent behavior. Abusers may believe that abusive behavior is “normal.” They may lack positive role models for their relationships.
- Ask students what they think are some of the effects of dating abuse on the person who experiences the violence or abuse. Then describe some of the effects that students do not mention, such as:
  - Feeling ashamed
  - Feeling anxious
  - Becoming depressed
  - Having thoughts of suicide
  - Doing poorly in school
  - Losing interest in friends or favorite activities
  - Dressing differently, changing hairstyles
  - Engaging in self-harm, such as eating disorders or cutting
  - Isolation
  - Discarding or changing friends

## STEP TWO (3 minutes)

### Define the roles of abuser, target and bystander.

- Point out that in dating relationships that involve violence and/or abuse, people may fall into one of three roles: abuser, target or bystander. Display the “**Roles in Dating Abuse: Abuser, Target and Bystander**” transparency. Explain that bystanders don’t have to be present when the abuser is hurting the target; they simply have to know about the abuse. Many teens report that abusive behavior goes both ways and boys and girls can be both victims and abusers. That’s why it is important for everyone to learn how to have safe and healthy relationships and how to identify abusive and controlling behavior.
- Review the definitions on the transparency. Mention that although bystanders cannot “rescue” the target from the abuse, they can encourage him or her to talk to people who can provide help and guidance and offer support. Bystanders may also be able to talk to friends who are behaving abusively and express their disapproval or ask them to stop if it is safe for the bystander to do so.

- Ask students who they think the abuser is in the **“I Thought Things Would Change”** excerpt. Who do they think is the target? Who do they think is a bystander? (Possible answers: Richard’s friends who watched Adaliz and reported to Richard if they saw her talking to anyone. Anyone else in Adaliz’s and Richard’s life who was aware or strongly suspected that he was abusing her.)

## **STEP THREE** (25 minutes)

Explore how bystanders can help.

- Ask students who they think could be a bystander to teen dating abuse. (Possible answers: friends of the abuser or the target, family members, classmates, neighbors, teachers, other school staff, etc.)
- Ask students what they could do to help a friend or family member who was being abused by someone he or she was dating.
- Give each student a copy of **“Helping a Friend or Family Member Who Is Being Abused.”**
- Review the top of the handout, which summarizes what a bystander to dating abuse can do.
- Read the directions at the bottom of the handout. Explain that students will work with a partner to write a letter to Adaliz.
- After 15 minutes, ask for two or three pairs of student volunteers to read aloud the letters they wrote. Have the rest of the class comment on how well the letter writers adhered to the suggestions in **“Helping a Friend or Family Member Who Is Being Abused.”** Ask students to comment on whether they agree with what the letter writers said. If not, what would they say to Adaliz?

## **STEP FOUR** (1 minute)

Conclusion.

- Explain that dating abuse is a serious problem that affects everyone involved, whether they are abusers, targets or bystanders. Now that the class knows a little more about the forms that dating abuse can take, in the next few lessons the class will explore how someone can become trapped in the pattern of abuse in a dating relationship and what to do to seek help.

## **ASSIGNMENT:**

To Understand What Teen Dating Abuse Is And How Young People Are Affected By It.

Write the following question on the board:

### **WHY IS IT HARD FOR ADALIZ TO END HER RELATIONSHIP WITH RICHARD?**

Tell students to copy the question in their journal. For homework, they should write their response to the question in their journal.

## **OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT**

Explain to students that they will have a conversation with a family member or friend about Adaliz's situation. Tell students to read aloud "I Thought Things Would Change" to the family member or friend and to ask this person what he or she would do to offer help to Adaliz. Then, tell them to read aloud the letter that they and their partner wrote to Adaliz. Have students write a paragraph or two summarizing the issues they discussed with the family member or friend and how the discussion influenced their thinking.

# TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NOTE: This Information Is Not Intended For Distribution To Students

## WARNING SIGNS

There are some warning signs that an intimate relationship may become abusive. Not all of the signs appear in all abusive or potentially abusive relationships, and sometimes there are no signs that an intimate relationship may become abusive. The existence of one or several of these behaviors does not necessarily mean that a relationship is abusive, but it may signal that the relationship is not completely healthy. Abusive behaviors can occur in all spheres of a young person's life: school, work, home, and online. Although adults tend to think of online behavior and email as a separate sphere of their lives, for teenagers, these spheres are all very much interconnected and intertwined.

### COMMON WARNING SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Extreme jealousy
- Constant put-downs, in person or online
- Making fun of the other person in front of friends or online
- Telling the other person what to do
- Explosive temper
- Verbal threats in person or via email or text message
- Possessiveness
- Preventing the other person from doing what he or she wants to do
- Severe mood swings
- Making false accusations about the other person, including others whom the person spends time with in real life and online
- History of violence
- Isolating the other person from family and friends, both in real life and online
- Encouraging the target to "block" friends and family from "buddy" and "friends" lists online
- Seeking financial control over the other person
- Calling/emailing/texting the other person every few minutes or at unreasonable hours to "check up" on the target's whereabouts, and becoming angry if the target does not immediately respond
- Checking the target's cell phone/computer to see who the target has been communicating with (missed calls, emails, voicemail, and text messages)
- Deleting "friends" on social networks and messages
- Altering the target's online profiles without consent
- Using their passwords without permission
- Nasty status changes and deletion of files or pictures the abuser doesn't approve of
- Pressure to send nude photos

# TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NOTE: This Information Is Not Intended For Distribution To Students

## TEENAGERS SEEKING HELP

Abuse in teenagers' intimate relationships is similar to adult domestic violence. Teens, however, face unique obstacles in recognizing and escaping abusive relationships. They often must overcome issues, such as distrust of adults, lack of knowledge about available resources, the simple fact that there are fewer resources for adolescents, and constant pressure from peers to be in an intimate relationship.

Teenagers who do not have financial resources or transportation may face practical barriers to seeking help from community agencies. In addition, social service agencies that deal with domestic violence issues frequently do not provide services to minors because of concerns about legal liability. Confusion about their legal rights vis-à-vis dating abuse adds another layer of difficulty for young people in need. They may also have fears about lack of confidentiality, mandated child abuse reporting and parental consent laws.

It is tempting to assume that the easy “solution” to an abusive relationship is simply to end it. However, ending abusive relationships can be extremely difficult—even dangerous. It is important to be sensitive to why individuals may have trouble breaking free from abusive relationships or even reaching out for help.

It is critical that the adults who surround teenagers in school—teachers, counselors, administrators—recognize the warning signs of teen dating abuse, understand the dynamics of an abusive relationship, and know how to respond to a young person who is experiencing dating abuse.

### WHEN STUDENTS REACH OUT TO A TEACHER FOR HELP

Some students may respond to this curriculum by asking for more information about dating abuse and/or disclosing that they are involved in an abusive relationship. It is important to acknowledge to the student the courage that it takes to reach out for help. Be certain to tell the student that the abuse is not his or her fault.

Before implementing this curriculum, review your state's mandatory reporting laws as well as your school's policy on mandatory reporting. Most states have enacted mandated reporting laws that require those working in child-oriented professions to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of a minor. In most states, teachers are mandated reporters. In some states, the definition of reportable abuse is narrowly limited to that inflicted by someone legally responsible for a child. In others, the definition of abuse is broader, including injury inflicted on a minor by any person. Under the more inclusive laws, abuse of a minor may include teen dating abuse and statutory rape.

Teachers should tell students about their duty as mandated reporters. In addition, teachers should offer students a confidential alternative to seeking help, such as contacting loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline, which provides free resources for teens, parents, friends, and family. All communication is confidential and anonymous. (Note that loveisrespect, National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline wallet cards are distributed to students in Lesson 4.)

# TEEN DATING ABUSE

## How Prevalent Is Teen Dating Violence?

- Girls and women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 3 (29%) teens that have been in a dating relationship experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, or threats of physical harm to a partner or self.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 4 teens in a relationship have texted or called their partner hourly between midnight and 5:00 AM.<sup>3</sup>
- 1 in 2 of all 14 - 24 year olds has been the target of some form of digital abuse.<sup>4</sup>
- 1 in 3 teens reports knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, or physically hurt by a partner. 45% of teen girls know someone who has been pressured or forced into having intercourse or oral sex.<sup>5</sup>
- 1 in 10 teens who have been in a relationship claim they have been threatened physically via email, instant messages, text, chat or other technological tool.<sup>6</sup>
- The vast majority of teens consider verbal and physical abuse to be serious issues in their age group.<sup>7</sup>
- Only 33% of teens who have been in or known about an abusive dating relationship report having told anyone about it.<sup>8</sup>
- Even fewer teens report having told their parents about abuse or threats occurring via cell phones, IM, text or e-mails.<sup>9</sup>
- Though 82% of parents feel confident that they could recognize the signs if their child was experiencing dating abuse, a majority of parents (58%) could not correctly identify all the warning signs of abuse.<sup>10</sup>

Adolescent males – as well as females – experience dating abuse. For more information on males as targets, and what males can do to end violence against females, see the bibliography at the front of this curriculum.

Depending on the school and community in which you work, you may (or may not) choose to explain to students that teen dating abuse occurs in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. Gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered teens are just as much at risk for abuse in their relationships as anyone else. loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline is equipped to talk to teens in both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships.

1 Callie Marie Rennison (2001). Intimate partner violence and age of victim, 1993-1999.

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

2 Liz Claiborne Inc./Family Violence Prevention Fund Survey, 2009.

3 Liz Claiborne Inc. Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study, 2007.

4 Associated Press/MTV Survey on Digital Dating Abuse, 2009.

5 Liz Claiborne Inc. Teen Dating Violence Survey, 2005.

6 Liz Claiborne Inc. Teen Dating Violence Survey, 2005.

7 Liz Claiborne Inc. Teen Dating Violence Survey, 2005.

8 Liz Claiborne Inc. Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study, 2007.

9 Liz Claiborne Inc. Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study, 2007.

10 Liz Claiborne Inc./Family Violence Prevention Fund Survey, 2009.

# HANDOUT

## **I THOUGHT THINGS WOULD CHANGE\*** Excerpt By Adaliz Rodriguez

Adaliz describes her relationship with Richard.

### **EXCERPT:**

What hurt me the most were his mean words. I wasn't used to the kind of names he called me. My parents never allowed that kind of language. I cried a lot. I walked looking down. I'd ditch [skip] school a lot, and, although I made sure I passed, I was falling behind. I was miserable. I'd tell him he was hurting me verbally. I'd try to break up with him, then he'd cry and say, "I'm sorry, don't leave me. I'll stop hitting you." I'd believe him, because I didn't want to leave him; I wanted him to change.

...He had to make sure I wasn't doing anything. He'd find out from his friends if I was talking to someone, and we'd get in a big argument. He'd call me disgusting names, and make me cry. He'd hit me, push me, sock me in the stomach and in the head. He was smart. He knew not to leave me with bruises that showed.

He told me about the problems his parents had. He used to jump on his father to stop him from hitting his mother. He said he'd never hit me like his father did. Then when he hit me, he'd say he didn't mean to, and turn it around so that it was my fault: "If you just didn't do those things, I wouldn't hit you." In other words, I shouldn't get him so mad, or provoke him to hit me.

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# HANDOUT

## WHAT IS TEEN DATING ABUSE?

Teen dating abuse is a pattern of physically, sexually, verbally, and/or emotionally abusive or controlling behavior in a dating relationship. It can involve digital communications and technologies or real world communications and physical interactions.

### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any unwanted contact with the other person's body. Physical abuse does not have to leave a mark or a bruise.

#### Examples:

- Scratching
- Pinching
- Strangling
- Shoving
- Punching
- Burning
- Pushing
- Physical restraint
- Biting
- Pulling hair
- Using a weapon
- Spitting
- Kicking
- Choking
- Slapping

### SEXUAL ABUSE

Any sexual behavior that is unwanted or interferes with the other person's right to say "no" to sexual advances.

#### Examples:

- Unwanted kissing or touching
- Date rape
- Forcing someone to go further sexually than he or she wants to
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity
- Not letting someone use birth control or protection against sexually transmitted infections
- Forcing someone to pose for still or video images while partially or fully nude or while performing sexual acts
- Forcing someone to watch others engaging in sexual acts in real life or in still or video images
- Coercing someone to take nude or sexual images of him/herself and share them
- Forcing someone to expose him/herself sexually to others or in public
- Forcing someone to wear or not wear items of clothing (such as underwear)
- Videotaping or recording a sexual act or nude image of someone without their knowledge or consent
- Sending someone unsolicited and unwelcomed sexual images
- Altering an image of a person to make it appear that they were posing in the nude or engaging in sexual activities

# HANDOUT

## VERBAL / EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Saying or doing something to the other person that causes the person to be afraid and/or have lower self-esteem. Trying to manipulate or control the person's feelings or behaviors. This can include online posts or digital communications designed to threaten, harass, or embarrass someone.

These can take place in real life or through the use of digital technologies, such as social networks, online games, email, text-messages, videos, photo-sharing and video-sharing sites, webcams, digital gaming devices, and instant messaging.

### Examples:

- Name-calling and put-downs
- Insulting the person or his/her family or friends
- Yelling and screaming
- Harming (or threatening to harm) the person or his/her family, friends, pets or property
- Making racial, ethnic or religious slurs about the person or those he/she cares for
- Making unwanted comments/sending unwanted messages of a sexual nature to the person
- Signing the person up for unwanted websites or services
- Sending the person pornographic videos, images or media
- Embarrassing the person in front of others
- Intimidating the person
- Spreading negative rumors about the person
- Preventing the person from seeing or talking to friends and family
- Telling the person what to do
- Making the person feel responsible for the violence/abuse
- Stalking
- Making the person feel guilty about wanting to leave the relationship by talking about the abuser's hard life and how alone and abandoned the abuser will feel if left
- Threatening to commit suicide
- Threatening to kill the target or a friend/family member of the target
- Threatening to expose personal information about the person (e.g., sexual orientation, immigration status, embarrassing secrets)
- Threatening to take away the person's child or children
- Sharing sexual or nude pictures of the person that were given in confidence
- Excessive or unwanted text-messaging, instant messaging, phone calls or emails to check up on someone
- Posting fake or altered images of someone or "photoshopping" a person's images to add or remove others from pictures
- Creating an abusive group or profile about someone, such as the "Katy is a slut" group or setting the person up for attacks by others online
- Posting nasty, false or abusive comments on the person's profile or other accounts or in their guestbook
- Accessing someone's accounts and changing the passwords so he or she no longer has access to them and/or posing as the person and altering his or her accounts and profiles

## **ROLES IN DATING ABUSE: ABUSER, TARGET, AND BYSTANDER.**

**ABUSER:** A person who physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally hurts or attempts to control an intimate partner.

**TARGET:** A person who is subjected to controlling behavior or hurt physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally by an intimate partner.

**BYSTANDER:** A person who is aware or suspects that someone is being abused in a dating relationship. The bystander may become aware of the abuse through the abuser's or the target's actions or words.

# HANDOUT

## HELPING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS BEING ABUSED

- Tell the person who is being abused that you are concerned for his or her safety. Make it clear that you know about the abuse, and that you are concerned. Tell your friend or relative that he or she does not deserve to be abused.
- Acknowledge that the abuse is not this person's fault. Remind the friend or relative that the abuser is responsible for the abuse. Tell the person that he or she is not alone.
- Be supportive and patient. It may be difficult for the person to talk about the abuse. Let your friend or relative know that you are available to listen or help any time.
- Avoid judging your friend or family member. The person may break up with and go back to the abuser many times before finally leaving the relationship. Do not criticize your friend or relative for doing this, even if you disagree with the choices he or she makes.
- Encourage the person to talk to others who can provide help and guidance. Offer to help the person talk to family, friends, a teacher or staff person at school, or a member of the clergy; or to help them find a counselor or support group. If your friend or relative decides to go to the police, to court, or to see a lawyer, offer to come along, but make sure you don't do the talking when you get there.
- Help the person to develop a practical and specific safety plan that focuses on preventing future harm or abuse. Visit [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org) to download A Teen's Guide to Safety Planning.
- Do not confront the abuser during an act of violence; it could be dangerous for you and your friend or relative. It is best to call the police or get help from an adult in this situation. However, if it feels safe to do so, you can let a friend know if you think his or her words or behavior is hurtful or controlling and encourage that person to get help.
- Remember that you cannot "rescue" the person who is the target of abuse. It is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt. Your friend or relative must be the one to decide what to do. Your job is to be supportive.

Adapted from Break the Cycle, Inc. 2005. [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org)

**DIRECTIONS:** Imagine that you are a friend or relative of Adaliz and that you knew that Richard was abusing her. Work with a partner to write a letter to Adaliz in which you reach out to help her. As you write, keep in mind the suggestions that are listed above.

# HANDOUT

## A LETTER TO PARENTS ON TEEN DATING ABUSE

**Dear Parents/Caregivers,**

As a physician who specializes in care for adolescents, a researcher on teen dating abuse, and a parent of a teen, I am often asked by other parents to talk about the warning signs of dating abuse, what parents should be looking for, and how they can help their child navigate out of an unhealthy relationship. Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these questions.

### A COMMON CHARACTERISTIC

A common characteristic of unhealthy and abusive relationships is the control that the abusive partner seeks to maintain in the relationship. This includes telling someone what to wear, where they can go, who they can hang out with, calling them names, humiliating them in front of others. The isolation from one's social network increases, as the abuser insists on spending time - "just the two of us" - and threatens to leave or cause harm if things do not go the way they want, saying, "You must not love me." Creating this isolation and dissolution of one's social supports (loss of friends, disconnectedness from family) are hallmarks of controlling behaviors. In addition, abusers often monitor cell phones and emails, and for example, may threaten harm if the response to a text message is not instant. Parents are rarely aware of such controlling tactics as these occur insidiously over time, and an adolescent may themselves not recognize the controlling, possessive behaviors as unhealthy. "He/she must love me because he/she just wants to spend time with me."

### WARNING SIGNS

While the following non-specific warning signs could indicate other concerning things such as depression or drug use, these should also raise a red flag for parents and adult caregivers about the possibility of an unhealthy relationship:

- no longer hanging out with his/her circle of friends
- wearing the same clothing
- distracted when spoken to
- constantly checking cell phone, gets extremely upset when asked to turn phone off
- withdrawn, quieter than usual
- angry, irritable when asked how they are doing

# HANDOUT

- making excuses for their boyfriend/girlfriend
- showering immediately after getting home
- unexplained scratches or bruises

Sexual coercion and violence are also not uncommon in teen dating abuse. Again, because of the emotional abuse and control, victims of sexual violence may be convinced that they are to blame for what has happened. “You’d do this if you loved me” or “If you don’t have sex with me, I’ll leave you” are common examples of sexual coercion. In some instances, girls in abusive relationships describe how their partners actively tried to get them pregnant. Rarely do teens disclose such sexual abuse to their parents as they may feel shameful, guilty, and scared. Parents need to be aware of the possibility of sexual abuse, and to ensure that they communicate with their child that they are never to blame if someone tries to make them do things sexually that they don’t want to do. And certainly, that no one ever has the right to put their hands on them, period. The physical and sexual violence can escalate quickly in these unhealthy relationships where the abusive partner has significant control over the other.

## ADVICE FOR PARENTS

Perhaps the best advice for parents is to start talking about what constitutes a healthy, respectful relationship early on with your child. Sharing the warning signs of teen dating abuse with your child and saying, “If you know someone who’s experiencing something like this, let’s talk about it - let’s talk about how you can be a good friend and help them stay safe.” Please assure your child that they are not to blame for an unhealthy relationship, and that you are available to help them be safe and happy. Please avail yourself of the many good resources available on teen dating abuse for youth and adults.

Peace,

**Elizabeth Miller, MD, PhD**

Assistant Professor in Pediatrics, UC Davis School of Medicine

Love Is Not Abuse Coalition Member for California



**LESSON 2:**  
**THE PATTERN OF ABUSE**  
**IN DATING VIOLENCE**

**PURPOSE:** To identify the pattern of abusive dating relationships, as well as obstacles, that make it difficult for someone who is targeted by dating abuse to seek help.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- define the typical stages of the pattern of abuse in dating violence
- analyze a text to identify specific actions and words that exemplify each of the typical stages in the pattern of dating abuse
- identify five obstacles that teenagers often face when seeking help in dating abuse situations

## MATERIALS

- Photocopy the “Breathing Underwater” excerpt for all students
- Photocopy “Patterns of Dating Abuse” for all students
- Photocopy “Looking at Nick and Caitlin’s Situation” for all students
- Photocopy “The Cycle of My Life” for all students

# ACTIVITIES

## STEP ONE (4 minutes)

Discuss the repeating phases that typically (but do not always) occur in dating abuse.

- Explain to students that in many abusive dating relationships, the physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse is not a one-time incident. It usually happens again and again, and the abuse may become more severe and more frequent over time. Point out that even one incident of dating abuse is too many.
- Give each student a copy of “**Patterns of Dating Abuse.**” Review the handout. Make sure students understand that every relationship is different and that the phases may occur infrequently, briefly, or over long stretches of time. Some targets, for example, never experience a “honeymoon” phase.
- Explain that abusers are often extremely jealous of the target’s friends and family, claiming to love their partner so much that they don’t want anyone else around. This kind of excessive possessiveness and jealousy is not a sign of love, but an example of the extreme control that abusers seek to have over their partners. Abusers often work actively to create an “us vs. them” situation between the target and his/her family, thereby making it much harder for the target to reach out to his or her family for help when her or she may need it.
- Mention that targets of dating abuse and violence often believe that the first incident of abuse is an isolated one that will not occur again. After the abuse, the abuser’s apologies and promises that it will not happen again may convince the target to stay in the relationship. Unfortunately, we know that once an individual has demonstrated abusive behavior toward a dating partner, he or she is likely to abuse the partner again. As the violence and abuse become more severe and occur more frequently, the target is likely to become more isolated and fearful, afraid to reach out for help.

## STEP TWO (30 minutes)

Analyze a text that illustrates an example of phases in dating abuse.

- Tell students that the class is going to read aloud an excerpt from a novel that illustrates the phases that make up a typical pattern of dating abuse.
- Give each student a copy of the “**Breathing Underwater**” excerpt.
- Read aloud the first paragraph, then have student volunteers each read one or two paragraphs aloud.
- Explain to students that they are going to work in groups of three to identify how the three phases of tension-building, explosion, and honeymoon play out in the excerpt from “**Breathing Underwater**”.
- Give each student a copy of “**Looking at Nick and Caitlin’s Situation.**” Tell students that as they work in their small groups to answer the questions, they must refer to the “**Breathing Underwater**” excerpt and provide specific examples from the text that support their answers, rather than trying to remember the text and responding in a general fashion.
- After 10-12 minutes, review the questions on the handout, selecting one or two small groups per question to share their answers with the class.

## STEP THREE (8 minutes)

Discuss the obstacles that teenagers face in seeking help for dating abuse situations.

- Explain that it can be very difficult for teenagers like Caitlin (and Adaliz from Lesson 1) to seek help when they are experiencing dating abuse.
- Remind students that for the previous homework assignment, they wrote about what they thought might make it hard for Adaliz to end her relationship with Richard. Ask for volunteers to share some of the ideas they came up with.
- Ask students if they can think of any additional obstacles that Caitlin—or any young person—could face in seeking help as the target of dating violence. Write students' ideas on the board. Sample answers may include:
  - Bond with/love for the abuser
  - Not sure what constitutes healthy and unhealthy behaviors in a relationship
  - Being isolated and feeling they have no one to talk to/no one who cares
  - Fear that friends or family members won't believe them
  - Fear that friends will side with the abuser
  - Fear of being hurt/killed
  - Fear of friend/family member being hurt/killed
  - Fear of losing children
  - Being turned away by friends or family members who don't believe them or tell them it's no big deal
  - Not wanting to tell an adult the details of their private life
  - Pressure from peers and/or family members to be in a relationship
  - Not wanting to lose the social status that might come with the relationship
  - Fear of the abuse escalating if the abuser discovers they have sought help
  - Specific threats from the abuser about what will happen if they seek help
  - Denying, minimizing, or rationalizing the abuse
  - Feeling vulnerable because of pregnancy, parenthood, sexual orientation, a disability, and/or immigration status
  - Feeling ashamed of being in an abusive relationship
  - Cultural and/or religious issues
  - Idealization of relationship
  - Substance abuse
  - Feeling hopeless
  - Low self-esteem, including feeling powerless to make changes in one's life
  - Lack of knowledge of resources
  - Not wanting the abuser to suffer negative consequences
  - Not knowing teenagers' legal rights related to abuse
  - Fear that information about their situation will not be kept confidential
  - Lack of local social and legal services targeted to teens in violent dating relationships
  - Lack of access to services for teens
  - Belief that the abuse will stop or that they can change the abuser
  - Financial dependence on the abuser
  - Feeling they can't escape the abuser because he or she lives in the same religious, ethnic, racial, or cultural community or attends the same school

## STEP FOUR (3 minutes)

Discuss the role that beliefs and attitudes can play in supporting teen dating abuse and violence.

- Explain that there are many beliefs people hold that reinforce dating abuse and violence and make preventing it challenging.
- Tell students to return to the “Breathing Underwater” handout to identify some of Nick’s beliefs related to dating and dating abuse. Sample answers:
  - He cannot believe that Caitlin could break up with him. (“She could not leave me.”)
  - He believes that it’s Caitlin’s fault that he hit her. (“I had to stop her...she could have killed us.”)
  - He believes that it’s okay for a boy to hit a girl. (“...you aren’t used to guys. You don’t know we play rough sometimes.”)
  - He believes that by buying Caitlin a ring, he can make up for hitting her. (“I wanted to buy you a ring. You know, like a symbol, since we’re going together.”)
- Ask students for examples of other beliefs that some people hold that support dating abuse. Sample answers:
  - A boyfriend or girlfriend who calls all the time to “check up” on you is demonstrating his or her love.
  - If one member of a couple spends money on the other person, the one who has spent the money is owed something in return.
  - In order to be a man, guys have to be strong, so they have to be “in control” in dating relationships.
  - Targets of dating abuse must be doing something wrong; otherwise, they would not be abused.
  - If someone is being abused but doesn’t end the relationship, he or she must like the abuse.
  - Women of certain ethnicities are more submissive/domestic than other women, and thus prefer to be controlled in a dating relationship.
- Explain that the only way to defeat these beliefs is for individuals, little by little, to replace them with beliefs that value nonviolent relationships that are based on respect.

## STEP FIVE (1 minute)

**Conclusion.**

- Explain that many individuals who have experienced dating abuse and violence confirm that the abuse often occurs in a pattern. And, while there are obstacles facing teenagers who seek help when they experience dating abuse, many young people—like Adaliz—do reach out and find the support they need to keep themselves safe.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Give each student a copy of “The Cycle of My Life.” Read aloud the directions. Tell students that they will need to have the “Patterns of Dating Abuse” handout with them to complete the assignment.

**OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT:** Have students rewrite the scene on the bridge from “Breathing Underwater” from the perspective of Caitlin, Nick’s girlfriend.

# HANDOUT

## PATTERNS OF DATING ABUSE

Every relationship is unique, however, many people who are the target of dating abuse find the abuse occurs in a distinct pattern with three phases: tension building, explosion, and honeymoon. Each phase can be as short as a few seconds or as long as several years.

### PHASE 1:

**Tension Building:** Things start to get tense between the two people. In this phase:

- The two people argue a lot.
- The abuser yells at the target for no reason.
- The abuser makes false accusations about the target.
- The target feels that she or he can't do anything right.
- The atmosphere is tense, as if things could blow up at any moment.

### PHASE 2:

**Explosion:** The tension is released in a burst of physical, sexual and/or verbal/emotional abuse. The abuser may:

- Scream and yell in a way that is frightening and/or humiliating.
- Hit, grab, shove, kick, slam the other person against the wall, etc.
- Throw objects.
- Threaten to hurt the other person or someone he or she cares about.
- Rape the other person or force him or her to go further sexually than he or she wants to.

### PHASE 3:

**Honeymoon:** The abuser tries to make the target stay in the relationship by apologizing and/or shifting the blame for the abuse onto someone or something else. The abuser may:

- Apologize and promise that the abuse will never happen again.
- Say "I love you."
- Buy the other person flowers or gifts.
- Accuse the other person of doing something to cause the abuse.
- Blame the abuse on other things such as alcohol, drugs or stress.

After the honeymoon phase, the tension starts to build again, leading to another explosion. Over time, the honeymoon phase may get shorter or even disappear, and the explosions may become more violent and dangerous. Some targets of dating abuse never experience the honeymoon phase—just the tension building and explosion phases. These phases do not happen in every abusive relationship. Someone may be experiencing dating abuse even if this pattern is not present.

# HANDOUT

## BREATHING UNDERWATER\* EXCERPT

In the novel “Breathing Underwater”, Nick, the sixteen-year-old narrator, recounts his relationship with Caitlin (also called Cat), whom he abused physically, verbally, and emotionally for most of their relationship. In this scene, Caitlin and Nick, who have been dating for a few months, are in Nick’s car, driving over a long two-lane bridge. Caitlin has just told Nick that she feels they need to talk about the way he treats her. Nick fears that she is going to tell him that she wants to end the relationship.

### EXCERPT:

“I heard you. I’m deciding how to respond.” She could not leave me. As I hit the word respond, I pulled to the left, veering into the southbound lane. Then I floored it past three cars. A southbound Volvo station wagon slammed its brakes within yards of us. The driver was honking, yelling. I pulled back into the northbound lane and flipped him off. I looked at Caitlin. Her mouth hung in mid-scream. I laughed.

“Do you trust me, Cat?” She was silent. I leaned closer. “Did I ever tell you about my mother?” Caitlin recovered enough to shake her head no, and I said, “I was four, five, I’d lie awake nights, listening to her and my dad fighting, him hitting her.” I looked at Caitlin. “You want to hear this?”

She nodded.

“I thought we’d pack up and leave someday, her and I. I lived for that day.” On the wheel, my knuckles were white. “Then, one morning, I wake up, and she’s gone, never came back. She ran from the monster and left me there with him.”

Caitlin removed her sunglasses. “I’m sorry, Nick.”

“So you talk about trust, it’s pretty important. I mean, when the one person you trust just picks up and leaves...”

Caitlin’s hand slipped across my shoulder. I tried to shrug her off, swerving left into traffic, then back. Terror filled Caitlin’s eyes. Her nails ripped my flesh.

“Trust me, Cat?” She could not leave me. I swerved again. “Cause if you haven’t figured it out, life doesn’t mean much to me. Without you, it’s worthless.”

A flock of seagulls headed across my windshield. She could not leave me. I swerved again, this time counting three before I veered back. She could not leave me. Caitlin screamed at me to stop.

“What’s the matter?” When she didn’t answer, I swerved again. “Oh—this. Maybe you’re right.” I straightened the wheel, looking beyond her to the orange and green water east of the bridge. Silence. I didn’t swerve. Nothing. We were halfway across. Caitlin relaxed.

Suddenly, I said, “Think I could make a right here?” Right was into water. I made like I’d do it, crash through the guardrail, then down. Caitlin screamed. She grabbed for the wheel. I shoved her away so her fingers clawed the air. She tried again, gripping both my hands. The car swerved left into the path of a Bronco towing a boat. I pulled it back. My mind knew what she was doing, but my eyes didn’t. I couldn’t see her. She was shrieking. God, shut up! Her voice deafened me, and it was all around, in my ears,

# HANDOUT

making me lose all control. She tried to grab the wheel. Blind and deaf, I drove, sun hot on my face. I had to get her off me. God, I just had to get her off me. Get her off me! Get off me! Get off!

Next thing I knew, I was driving on land. I couldn't tell you whether it was minutes or hours later. Caitlin hung across the seat, head cradled in her fingers. My hand throbbed, and I knew I'd hit her. I'd hit her. I was tired. She'd worn me out, but the anger inside me dissolved, replaced by that regret. But I'd had to stop her. She'd been irrational, overwrought, shouldn't have touched the wheel. She could have killed us. I looked at her. The seat was the length of a football field. Caitlin faced the window. She was so beautiful. Ahead was a red pickup with a Jesus fish. It was going at a good clip, but when we reached the next passing zone, I overtook it and a few other cars. Cat stiffened. I merged back into traffic and reached to stroke her hair.

She lifted her head, cautious as a runner stealing home, and stared.

"Are you all right, Caitlin?" I asked.

When she didn't answer, I repeated the question.

She shook her head. "You hit me."

I told her no. I hadn't. I mean, she was grabbing the wheel. We'd almost creamed the Bronco. I had to get her off me before we got killed.

"Because you were driving off the bridge," she said.

I laughed and said she knew me better. . . I'd never do it for real. Besides, we'd have crashed the guardrail, and I'd have gotten killed for wrecking the car.

"But you hit me, Nick." She leaned out the window toward the sideview mirror to see if her cheek was getting red.

And it was. I didn't expect it to be red, but it was—a little. I hadn't hit her hard, just enough to get her off me. I said, "Don't you know you shouldn't grab the wheel when someone's driving?"

"But I thought—"

She was pretty shaken. Mad maybe? I pulled her close. "Sorry I freaked you out, Kittykat. I forget you aren't used to guys. You don't know we play rough sometimes." She kept protesting, and I said, "You know what I was thinking? I wanted to buy you a ring. You know, like a symbol, since we're going together. What's your birthstone?"

Still, she stared like her life was flashing before her eyes. "You hit me, Nick."

I kissed her. She drew away, and I pulled her back. "Your birthday's in February, right? I'll ask the jeweler what the stone is."

I held her close until she stopped struggling. The sun was down, but it wasn't dark enough for a moon, and we crossed bridges connecting the islands, Big Pine Key, Plantation Key, Key Largo. Then we drove through mainland Miami a while. When we reached home, the sky above Rickenbacker Causeway was black, and Caitlin slept on my shoulder.

\*From "Breathing Underwater" by Alex Flinn. Copyright © 2001 by Alexandra Flinn. Used by permission of HaperCollins Publishers.

# HANDOUT

## TEACHER'S COPY

### LOOKING AT NICK AND CAITLIN'S SITUATION (Sample Answers Filled In)

**DIRECTIONS:** In your small group, respond to the following questions:

- 1.** Cite at least two specific examples from the “Breathing Underwater” excerpt that indicate that the tension is building between Nick and Caitlin (before the physical violence occurs).
  - In the first paragraph, Nick intentionally steers the car into the path of oncoming traffic.
  - In the same paragraph, Caitlin’s mouth “hung in mid-scream.”
  - In the fourth paragraph, Nick’s knuckles are white on the steering wheel.
  - Nick keeps repeating to himself, “She could not leave me.”
  
- 2.** When Nick does explode, what types of abusive behaviors does he demonstrate? (Refer to the “Patterns of Dating Abuse” handout.)
  - Nick hits Caitlin.
  - He uses the threat of violence by repeatedly swerving into oncoming traffic.
  
- 3.** In the honeymoon phase after the abuse, what does Nick tell himself to try to shift the blame for the abuse onto Caitlin?
  - “I just had to get her off me.”
  - “I was tired.”
  - “She’d worn me out. . .”
  - “I’d had to stop her. She’d been irrational, overwrought, shouldn’t have touched the wheel. She could have killed us.”
  - “I hadn’t hit her hard, just enough to get her off me.”
  
- 4.** What does he say to Caitlin to try to shift the blame onto her?
  - He tells her that he didn’t hit her.
  - He tells her he had to get her off him “before we got killed.”
  - He tells her he would “never do it for real.”
  - He says, “Don’t you know you shouldn’t grab the wheel when someone is driving?”
  - He says, “I forget you aren’t used to guys. You don’t know we play rough sometimes.”
  
- 5.** After Nick is abusive to Caitlin, what does he do to try to convince her to stay with him?
  - He strokes her hair.
  - He asks her, “Are you all right?”
  - He tells her he wants to buy her a ring “since we’re going together.”
  - He kisses her.
  - He holds her close until she stops struggling.

# HANDOUT

## LOOKING AT NICK AND CAITLIN'S SITUATION

**DIRECTIONS:** in your small group, respond to the following questions:

- 1.** Cite at least two specific examples from the “Breathing Underwater” excerpt that indicate that the tension is building between Nick and Caitlin (before the physical violence occurs).
- 2.** When Nick does explode, what types of abusive behaviors does he demonstrate? (Refer to the “Patterns of Dating Abuse” handout.)
- 3.** In the honeymoon phase after the abuse, what does Nick tell himself to try to shift the blame for the abuse onto Caitlin?
- 4.** What does he say to Caitlin to try to shift the blame onto her?
- 5.** After Nick is abusive to Caitlin, what does he do to try to convince her to stay with him?

# HANDOUT

## THE CYCLE OF MY LIFE\*

by Pamela, age 16

It all starts out wonderful until he strikes  
Constantly hearing I'm sorry  
Until it doesn't matter anymore  
Forgiving every time, forgetting never  
Calling out for him to stop  
Never stopping until it is almost too late  
Never thinking about the consequences of his actions  
Just making me think out every possible consequence of mine  
Hearing I'm sorry all over again  
Meeting him with open eyes  
Awaiting the gifts I know will pour forward  
Until it all stops—  
And the cycle begins all over again

Directions: List below signs that Pamela is experiencing phases two and three of the typical pattern of abuse in dating violence. Refer to "Patterns of Dating Abuse" for examples of behaviors that occur in these phases.

**PHASE 2: SIGNS OF EXPLOSION:**

**PHASE 3: SIGNS OF HONEYMOON:**

\*From [www.teenrelationships.org/teenssay/teensay.htm](http://www.teenrelationships.org/teenssay/teensay.htm).



**LESSON 3:**  
**DIGITAL ABUSE IN DATING VIOLENCE**

**PURPOSE:** To understand the role of digital technologies in dating abuse.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- recognize the role digital technologies may play in dating violence
- define vocabulary related to digital dating abuse and apply it to the text and to their own experiences
- understand what to do if they witness digital dating abuse
- understand the risks and legal consequences of digital abuse and sexting

## MATERIALS

- Read “**Teacher Background Information: Digital Dating Abuse**” (appears later in this lesson) before teaching this lesson
- Read “**Looking at Shannon and Greg’s Situation**” teacher copy
- Photocopy “**Shannon’s Story**” for all students
- Photocopy “**Looking at Shannon and Greg’s Situation**” for all students
- Photocopy “**Reporting Digital Abuse**” for all students
- Photocopy “**The 20 Questions**” for all students

Additionally, as you teach this you may find that your students’ reaction warrants an extension from one class period to two.

# ACTIVITIES

## STEP ONE (4 minutes)

### Create a framework for the digital dating abuse discussions.

Encourage students to refer back to Lesson 1 regarding the definition of dating abuse. Ask for a volunteer to recall the definition: Teen dating abuse is a pattern of physically, sexually, verbally and/or emotionally abusive or controlling behavior in a dating relationship. (If necessary, refer them back to the handout from Lesson 1: “**What is teen dating abuse?**”) Based on that definition, ask the class to define “digital dating abuse” and share ways an abusive partner may use technology against the target. [Digital abuse is when someone uses digital technology as a weapon to hurt someone else. Digital dating abuse is when digital abuse is used in a dating situation. Using technology to spy on, harass or embarrass a partner in social communities can be a powerful abuse tactic in any relationship.]

- Answers will vary, and may include:
  - Calling/emailing/texting the target to “check up” on him or her.
  - Checking the target’s missed calls, emails, voicemail and text messages to see who he or she has been communicating with.
  - Deleting “friends” on social networks.
  - Accessing the target’s Facebook/MySpace page and posing as or altering his or her online profile.
  - Calling or sending unwanted emails or texts that are threatening in tone.
  - Sending unwanted emails or texts that are sexual in nature (sexual harassment).
  - Stealing or breaking digital devices (laptops, phones, etc.) with the intent to harass or intimidate.
  - Directing threatening calls, emails, or texts to any friends or family members of the target.
  - “Ganging up” on the target by having friends send threatening calls, emails, or texts to the target.
  - Using camera phones to take unwanted pictures of the target and then using those photos as a form of blackmail/intimidation, sharing these photos on social networking sites, etc.
- As students start to discuss things the abuser can do on the internet, encourage students to think beyond “Facebook” and “MySpace.” Do they have other accounts online where they interact with friends, like gaming or photo-sharing sites? Could an abuser harass a target through a video game system (Wii, Playstation, etc.) that is connected to the internet? Does anyone use Skype or Vonage? How could that be misused?
- If time allows, summarize this discussion of technologies by asking the students to help categorize the examples they listed above as one of the following:
  - **Direct Attacks** by the abuser against the target (where he or she is called names, harassed, or has his or her property destroyed, or has friends and family threatened).
  - **Public Attacks** by the abuser about the target (posts or communications broadcast to others designed to embarrass or damage the reputation of the target).
  - **Cyberbullying-by-Proxy** where the abuser manipulates others to commit direct attacks, public attacks, privacy invasions, or posed attacks designed to hurt the target.
  - **Privacy Invasions** by the abuser spying on the target without permission, and monitoring the target’s communications or activities.

- **Posed Attacks** by the abuser using the anonymity offered by digital technologies to steal someone’s ID, hide his or her real identity, or pose as someone else (even the target, in some situations).

Some examples students give will fit into more than one category. For example, a post on the target’s Facebook page can be both a direct attack and a public attack.

## STEP TWO (30 minutes)

**Analyze a text that illustrates how digital technologies can be involved in the three phases of dating abuse.**

- Tell students that the class is going to read aloud a short story that illustrates how digital technologies are used in dating abuse and how the three phases of dating abuse play out online.
- Give each student a copy of the “**Shannon’s Story**” handout.
- Read the story aloud or assign one student to read the entire story aloud or ask students to read it to themselves, silently.
- Explain to students that they are going to work in small groups to identify how digital technologies can be used in dating abuse and that they will be asked to identify how the three phases of tension building, explosion, and honeymoon play out in “**Shannon’s Story**.”
- Give each student a copy of “**Looking at Shannon & Greg’s Situation**.” Tell students that as they work in their small groups to answer the questions, they should refer to “**Shannon’s Story**” and provide specific examples from the text that support their answers, rather than trying to remember the text and responding in a general fashion.
- After 10 minutes, review the questions on the handout, selecting one group per question to share their answers with the class. (10 minutes of discussion.)

## STEP THREE (8 minutes)

**Explore the trends of password-sharing and sexting as ways students use to show intimacy and trust in a relationship.**

### PASSWORD-SHARING

Ask the students if sharing passwords is common in dating relationships and friendships, and ask how many of them have voluntarily shared their passwords with a boyfriend or girlfriend or close friend. Ask students to brainstorm ways to handle situations where a friend or significant other asks for your password. If there’s time, consider having them role-play an effective discussion.

- Ask students how someone may be able to access your account, even if they don’t know the password. Students will likely say “hacking” or “jacking.” Ask them to expand upon that. Some possible answers include:
  - Clicking the “forgot password” button, guessing the answer to your secret question.
  - Asking a mutual friend or sibling that knows your password.
  - Using a computer or phone that you’ve asked to “remember” your password.

**IMPORTANT:** Remind students that even if they have shared their password with someone, they are NOT to blame for the abuse, especially considering the additional ways an abuser could have accessed their account.

- Give each student a copy of “**The 20 Questions**” handout. Point out that most teens and adults tend to choose an easily guessed password. Ask them to review this list of the 20 most-commonly used password sources. Ask them how many of their passwords could

be guessed by anyone who knew enough about them to answer these questions accurately. Suggest that they change their passwords to something that is both easy to remember and hard to guess.

Additional activities for cyber safety:

- Put together a list of 20 questions that you think are used most often by other students for their passwords.
- Do a survey of how many students know the answers to these 20 questions for their best friends.
- Ask your parents if you could have guessed their passwords by using these 20 questions as a guide.

## SEXTING

“Sexting” is sending nude, seminude or provocative pictures or video of yourself or others via cell phone. Ask the students about sexting in relationships. We know that some teens do send “sexy” photos. At what point in a relationship do these teens share these intimate photos? Why do they send them? (For a broader discussion on “sexting,” visit [athinline.org](http://athinline.org) and [wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org).)

- If needed, prompt students by asking:
  - Before? (to try to attract someone)
  - During a relationship? (to show how much they love and trust each other, as an alternative to sexual contact, or as a way to try to keep a boyfriend or girlfriend)
  - After? (to ruin someone’s reputation or just get revenge for being dumped)
- Ask the students: How does sexting relate to digital dating abuse?  
Possible answers include:
  - An abuser may send them to embarrass the target.
  - An abuser may use sexting pictures as blackmail, threatening to share them with the whole school or post them online unless the target does exactly what the abuser wants him/her to.
  - An abuser may threaten the target to coerce him/her into posing for sexy photos.

## STEP FOUR (3 MINUTES) Conclusion.

- Review the steps to take to help a friend dealing with digital dating abuse.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Have students explore the role of bystanders in digital dating abuse. They should be given the “Reporting Digital Abuse” handout.

- Ask the students if anyone has ever reported digital abuse. If so, what happened?
- Ask students if they will think twice now before sending a sext of themselves or passing one on of someone else.
- Ask students what they learned today that they hadn’t known before. Ask them what they will do differently. Ask what they will share with others.

**OPTIONAL CLASS PROJECTS:** Ask the students if they are interested in creating a poster, skit, podcast or video designed to teach other teens about digital dating abuse. [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org) provides digital resources that can be used in your project and will post the completed public service projects on its [StopCyberbullying.org](http://StopCyberbullying.org) website.

Ask students to visit [ThatsNotCool.com](http://ThatsNotCool.com) and view the two-sided stories. Ask them to create a two-sided story or a poem, song, rap, or other creative expression to share with the class and/or to post on [ThatsNotCool.com](http://ThatsNotCool.com).

# TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NOTE: This Information Is Not Intended For Distribution To Students

## DIGITAL DATING ABUSE

### DIGITAL DATING ABUSE OVERVIEW

When dating abuse impacts teens, it impacts all parts of their lives. It affects them in school, at home, among their peers, at work, at grandma's house, and in their social lives. With digital technology playing such an important role in their lives, it shouldn't be a surprise that dating abuse has gone digital.

For many teenagers today, the real or perceived boundaries between "real" and "online" life can be blurry. Actions in both "worlds" are intermingled and inextricably linked. Webcams, "cybering" (the online version of phone sex), and "sexting" (taking and sending sexual, sexually provocative, or nude images to someone via cell phone) can each play a significant role in dating relationships.

The same tactics of power and control that are generally the hallmark of abusive relationships extend to these new technologies. One partner may try to coerce the other to take and share a sexual or nude image. Unsolicited nude or sexual images may be sent to dating partners to remind them of what they are "missing" at that moment (or sent during the flirtation or "pre-dating" phase that is common especially in teen dating, to give a sample of what they can look forward to). There is also a growing expectation that partners will always be available and respond immediately to any digital communication, from instant messages and wall posts to cell phone calls and text messages. Many partners expect a response 24/7. According to Liz Claiborne Inc.'s Tech Abuse in Teen Relationships Study, 30% of teens who have been in a relationship say they've been text messaged 10, 20, 30 times an hour by a partner wanting to know where they are, what they're doing, or who they're with.

This "ever-on" reality makes it easier for partners to textually-harass with repeated text messages and cell phone calls, expecting an immediate reply. They demand to know what their partner is doing, how much they are loved, and require updates every few minutes. Texts may be used for middle of the night "booty texts" or calls, expecting their target to wake up and accommodate their needs.

Cell phones and social networks are the two most commonly abused digital technologies when teens are involved. And new cell phone applications that connect the two are the way digital abuse images make their way to a broad audience of the couple's peers to do the greatest damage in the shortest amount of time.

Spying, hacking, and monitoring, with or without a partner's knowledge, is a frequent digital dating abuse tactic. Activating GPS devices, reviewing call logs and keystroke loggers that use spyware technology to report every word and activity to the abuser are the newest tools to join video surveillance and phone tapping technology in attempts to control a partner. Jealous and suspicious partners are not limited to parking around the corner any longer. Their technology can do their spying for them. And to complicate matters further, it changes each and every day with the digital abuses limited only by the bandwidth, creativity, and energy of the abuser.

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## WHAT IS DIGITAL DATING ABUSE?

Digital abuse is when someone uses digital technology as a weapon to hurt someone else. Digital dating abuse is when digital abuse is used in a dating situation. Using technology to spy on, harass, or embarrass a partner in social communities can be a powerful abuse tactic in any relationship.

Abusers can start online and move offline or vice versa. They can be anonymous, use stolen identities, or pretend to be the target. Tactics include spying, hacking and invasions of privacy, sexting-related harassment, extortion, posing, and set-ups. Any digital device can be used to hurt someone if the abuser is creative enough.

Typically, there are five approaches to digital abuse that are used as weapons in dating relationships:

1. **Direct Attacks** by the abuser against the target (where they are called names, harassed, or have their property destroyed or their friends and family threatened). “You are stupid!” “If you refuse to listen to me you will be sorry!”
2. **Public Attacks** by the abuser about the target (posts or communications broadcast to others designed to embarrass or damage the reputation of the target). “Sarah is such a slut!” “Jeff is a wimp!”
3. **Cyberbullying-by-Proxy** where the abuser manipulates others to commit direct attacks, public attacks, privacy invasions, or posed attacks designed to hurt the target. “Jenny said such mean things about you. I can’t believe you’d stand for it!” “Jamie is cheating on you!” or malicious messages sent to the target’s friends from another account pretending to be the target.
4. **Privacy Invasions** by the abuser spying on the target or monitoring their communications or activities – with or without permission.
5. **Posed Attacks** by the abuser using the anonymity offered by digital technologies to steal someone’s ID or pose as someone else (even the target, in some situations).

Digital dating abuse can be conducted using any digital device from cell phones to computers to webcams. In cases of sexting, the target’s image can be taken without his or her knowledge or consent and sent selectively to those with whom it can do the most damage (such as parents, schools, police or bosses). Or it can involve a privately-entrusted nude or sexually provocative image that is released to the entire community upon break-up or after a fight.

Xbox 360, PSP, Playstation and even DSi can be used to threaten, harass or target someone for harassment by others using typed chat, voice-over-IP (internet voice communications), ID theft and posing, as well as stolen accounts and points. Teens have identified to WiredSafety.org 67 different ways a cell phone can be used to digitally abuse someone. Social networks (like Facebook), video-sharing networks (like YouTube), and photo-sharing networks (like Flickr) are all fertile ground for digital abuse with devastating results to the target.

Hacking software, monitoring and GPS tools, video surveillance cameras, Trojan Horses (a technology that gives others access to your computer by remote control), and other

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“malware” can be easily installed in person or sent online to the computer, car, or home of the target to report back to the abuser, destroy devices, data and content, or set the target up to be investigated for or charged with crimes. Text messages, instant messages, cache and history files, cell phone logs, and telephone calls can be tapped, checked, and recorded. Passwords can be guessed, saved on devices controlled by the abuser, or used without authorization. Text messages, instant messages and cell phone calls can arrive day and night by the hundreds and even thousands.

Abusive messages can be conveyed using popular social networks, such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and myYearbook. And the abuser can ask friends and classmates to vote for the target as the ugliest, fattest, sluttiest, [fill in the blank] teen and pass it on. Rude and hateful comments can be added to network walls, videos, and pictures, and targets can be reported falsely for violating terms of service at their favorite sites.

The list goes on and on, with every new digital technology adding a new tactic and opportunity for the dating abuser. Teaching students to recognize digital dating abuse when they encounter it and what to do to stop it is crucial, as is helping them understand digital self-defense strategies.

## SEXTING

“Sexting” is sending nude, seminude, or provocative pictures or video of yourself or others via cell phone. Some experts estimate that “sexting” among minors (under 18 years of age) involves roughly 20% of teen girls. The truth is that no one knows how often it happens. What we do know, based upon the research and work of WiredSafety, is that:

- These images are often taken when under the influence of peer pressure, or in response to threats or coercion by a partner
- Once teens are sexually intimate, it is common that the girl is asked to share at least one nude or sexual image or video with the boy
- Some teen girls will share a nude image with a boy they are seeing instead of being sexually intimate or to delay intimacy
- Even if the boy never voluntarily shares the image with anyone else, his friends, siblings, or parents may stumble across it when using or searching his devices
- Some boys have used knowledge of a girl having posed for a sexting or sexing image to extort them into taking more sexual pictures or engage in sex acts with them

As supplement to your lesson, you may want to show videos about sexting and other forms of digital dating abuse to illustrate these issues for the students. There are Public Service Announcements from MTV’s A Thin Line campaign, as well as an MTV News special called “Sexting in America” on the video link that accompanied the curriculum, which can be powerful tools in teaching today’s teens about these digital behaviors. We strongly suggest you view the videos and determine which may be most appropriate for your classroom and students.

## THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS IN DIGITAL DATING ABUSE

In typical dating abuse the bystanders generally know the target and/or the abuser. They may be mere witnesses to the abuse, or knowingly or unknowingly help facilitate it. These same

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types of bystanders exist in a digital environment but might also be joined by strangers who witness the abuse and know neither the target nor the abuser.

Abusers typically try to avoid witnesses to their abuse (especially when the abuser is seeking to hide the abusive activity or blame it on the target). Even when the abuse is designed to ruin the reputation of someone, it is staged so as not to appear as abuse. As a result, offline abuse is often a secret to everyone except perhaps the target's closest friends and family.

Because of the nature of online social communities with 350 million+ users, it is highly likely that strangers will witness digital abuse that is posted online or sent in viral messages. For example, sexting-related harassment can result in tens of thousands of strangers viewing the nude photo. As a young teen explained to Diane Sawyer on Good Morning America in April 2009, "In the beginning it's a shocking picture of someone you know. You have a stake in protecting her or sharing it with others because of who she is. But as it continues to move outside of your school and community, it eventually just becomes a picture of some naked girl."

## STRANGERS WHO WITNESS ABUSE

Strangers who receive or view a picture "of some naked girl" are bystanders witnessing digital dating abuse. They can report it, ignore and delete it, or pass it on. And their choice can make a significant difference in the duration and scope of the digital abuse. And, to the target trying to contain the abuse, it can make all the difference in the world. Empowering bystanders to report what they see is crucial. To do that, we have to address the issues that cause bystanders to ignore or forward the image in the first place such as:

- Awareness programs have to teach them what should be reported.
- Bystanders must understand that a good faith report, even if it turns out to be wrong, will not come back and haunt them.
- The networks need to make reporting abuse easy and remind their users that abuse reports are confidential.
- And bystanders must be convinced that making the report makes a big difference. If they think their abuse report will be futile, they won't bother reporting what they see.

How bystanders take a stand can make all the difference in the world:

- They can reach out to the abuser and discuss the abuse calmly.
- They can reach out to others and have them agree not to pass any of the abuse onto others.
- They can report it to the sites/networks and school authorities.
- They can refuse to vote, forward messages, or visit the profiles or sites where the abuse is happening.
- They can share what they have learned in these lessons about getting help, digital hygiene, and self-defense
- They can seek help online from sites like [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org), [teenangels.org](http://teenangels.org), and [wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org).
- They can call someone out when they see them doing things that they shouldn't be doing, like reprogramming their partner's cell phone or warning targets not to leave cell phones unattended.

Reporting abuse is one of the easiest ways for a bystander to do something. Yet, many teens

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are uncomfortable reporting abuse. Sometimes they don't know if the report is warranted. They may worry that they have misread the situation and might get blamed for making a report that turns out to be groundless. They also often believe that the person or account being reported is given their name or contact information if they render a report. Some don't know where or how to report something or believe that the network or site doesn't do anything when abuses are reported. Few understand what the network or site will take action on, never having read the terms of service when joining.

This is why it is crucial for their reports to be effective. Knowing where and how to report different kinds of abuse can sometimes mean the difference between someone taking action based on a report, or the report just sitting in limbo. The handout "**Reporting Digital Abuse**" details how to make a digital abuse report online and should be reviewed by you beforehand.

Remind students that most of the time the identity of the person reporting the abuse is not given to the person being reported. The sites and networks record those who make reports in order to track false reports that are intended to target someone else, but if bystanders report something in good faith that they believe is digital abuse, they won't get into trouble.

Consider setting up an anonymous reportline at school or a digital abuse "report box" where bystanders can inform the school about incidents of digital abuse anonymously. According to WiredSafety's polls, only 5% of teens and middle schoolers who had experienced digital abuse would tell their parents. And those who turned to adults to report abuse typically turned to teachers or adults at their school. Make it easier for teens to know where to go and how you can help.

And teach the students to act quickly when they see digital abuse. The faster they act, the more effective their actions are. (You can learn more about this in the "**Reporting Digital Abuse**" handout.)

## SEXTING AND THE LAW

Teens know about classmates' sexting. They have, in all likelihood, seen naked or sexual images of classmates. They may have sent or received sexting images or are considering sending them. But they don't know very much about the laws that apply when someone creates, shares, or possesses a nude or sexual image of a minor.

There are two levels of laws - federal laws that apply to everyone in the US and state laws that apply just to someone or some entity in their jurisdiction. Underage sexual images and certain nude photos fall under the "sexual exploitation" laws at both levels. The "age of majority" for the federal laws (after which young people are no longer treated as minors) is 18. A few states treat teens as minors until they are 19 or older. Some treat them as adults when they reach 16. Since the federal laws cover anyone under 18, that is typically used as the lowest common denominator.

Anyone who creates, distributes or possesses "child pornography," even if it's a sexual image of themselves, can be charged and convicted under child pornography

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laws and be classified as a registered sex offender. Regardless of whether the person asked for the image or not, if he or she has it, the law presumes the person is in possession of child pornography. While some states have changed their laws to treat minor-to-minor voluntarily shared images differently from adult-minor sex images, in many states, anyone along the chain of production/sharing/possession can still be labeled a “sex offender” and be prohibited from living near a school or park. They may also have to register whenever they move, get a job, or attend school.

Several cases have been successfully prosecuted against teens for taking sexting images, sharing them, and possessing them. Remember, however, that the person pictured in the sexting photo may not have actively participated in the taking or distribution of the photo. Sexting photos are not always sent willingly. Often, abusers force or coerce the target into taking and/or sending nude photos.

The MTV video link also contains a segment from “Sexting in America” featuring a Florida man who ended up on the wrong side of the law after he distributed nude photos of his girlfriend via text message. The man, who had to register as a sex offender, discusses the problems he has encountered since sending the pictures and the legal ramifications of his actions.

## DIGITAL ABUSE AND THE LAW

Many teens (and even adults) think that nothing can be done about digital abuse because of “free speech.” Free speech usually has nothing to do with people harassing each other in real life or online. When someone says mean or hurtful things about you online, what they say falls into one of three categories, in the same way it does in the real world. (The cyber-laws here are not much different from the offline ones.)

- They can be rude, but not actionable. (“I hate you. You’re stupid! No one likes you,” etc.)
- They can be defamatory or harassing, and be civilly actionable (through a lawsuit, instead of through the police, such as “You are a crook, child molester, or drunk,” etc., when you are not).
- They can be criminal harassment or other similar cybercrimes and actionable through the police. (This typically involves a serious threat of bodily harm or repetitive communications after being asked to stop, such as “I am going to kill you, hurt your children, or defraud others using your identity,” etc., or sending you 500 text messages after you let them know you are not interested in getting their texts.)

Currently, all 50 states have some form of harassment law that covers digital abuse. The hacking laws, which criminalize digital intrusions, ID theft, and unauthorized access cover most spying and snooping activities that are included within digital abuse as do the wiretapping laws. To learn more about cyber harassment laws, visit [WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org).

Generally, people who are or feel harassed online have options. They can ignore the attacks, ask the site or provider to remove the offensive content, hire a lawyer, or call the police. It’s not always easy making that choice. When teens are involved, however, the adults counseling them should always put the teen’s safety and mental health first.

# HANDOUT

## TEACHER'S COPY

### LOOKING AT SHANNON AND GREG'S SITUATION (SAMPLE ANSWERS FILLED IN)

**DIRECTIONS:** In your small group, respond to the following questions or to only the one question assigned to your small group, as well as to question no. 5.

**1.** Cite at least three specific examples of Greg's misuse of power in Shannon's story – make sure that at least two examples are digital.

#### OFFLINE

- Greg called Shannon "stupid," saying that these other guys only wanted one thing
- Greg always criticized Shannon's friends and tried to isolate her from them
- Greg accused Shannon of cheating
- Greg threatened to break up with her whenever they had an argument
- Greg yelled at Shannon frequently
- Greg threw things and broke things when he was upset
- Greg was suspicious of everything Shannon did
- Greg's jealousy got in the way of Shannon's work for the yearbook committee
- Greg said he didn't want to be with a girl who others thought was easy, and he said boys thought she was easy

#### DIGITAL

- Greg misused Shannon's passwords, logging into her accounts, communicating with her friends, reading her IMs and text messages, and deleting pictures
- Greg changed Shannon's social network status when he was mad at her to say "Shannon is stupid"
- Greg called her names in IM and by text message
- Greg would block certain senders, change Shannon's buddy lists and delete IMs before she could even see them
- Greg would monitor her friends and buddy lists to delete all guys
- Greg "defriended" and blocked messages from Shannon on his Facebook page
- Greg would send her constant text messages, demanding that she respond immediately and made her sleep with her cell phone

**2.** When Greg does explode, what types of abusive behaviors, online and offline, does he engage in?

#### OFFLINE ACTIONS

- Greg blamed her for leading guys on
- He yelled at her and called her names
- Greg refused to answer Shannon's phone calls
- He went ballistic when she took an innocent picture of the football team

#### DIGITAL ACTIONS

- Greg defriended Shannon and blocked her from his accounts
- Greg deactivated Shannon's Facebook account
- He would harass her by text messaging
- He destroyed her Flickr content
- He changed her Facebook account to "deactivate" it

# HANDOUT

## TEACHER'S COPY

**3.** After the abuse, what does Greg tell Shannon to justify his abusive behavior and shift the blame for the abuse to her? Why do you think this is an effective tactic on Greg's part? How does it help him control Shannon's actions? Identify how Greg strategically used digital abuse to attack Shannon's self-esteem.

- Greg convinces Shannon that her actions are misunderstood by boys.
- Greg uses the one year difference in their ages, and his greater technology skills to convince her that he knows more than she does.
- Greg calls her stupid, repeatedly, online and offline and Shannon starts to believe him.
- Greg convinces Shannon that she has given him no choice but to teach her a lesson for talking with and befriending boys.

**4.** Bystanders play an important role in either stopping or perpetuating abuse online and offline. How did Greg use digital abusive tactics to isolate Shannon from her friends and potentially helpful bystanders?

- By using her ID to send nasty comments and refuse friend requests, Greg allowed others to think Shannon was the one sending mean messages to them. Those people could reject her friendship.
- When Greg blocked friends on Shannon's buddy list and either deleted messages from her friends or replied, pretending to be Shannon, they all thought she was turning against her friends.
- Shannon pulled away from all guy friends to avoid making Greg angry. These guy friends were not there to provide support for her when she needed it.
- Shannon's friends who did not know about the abusive relationship might have pulled away when they saw bizarre posts, status changes, and messages on her Facebook account.
- Shannon's friends may have resented that their private messages were being reviewed by Greg without their knowledge or consent.

### Could bystanders have helped?

- Bystanders can always help.
- Bystanders may have been able to show her how controlling Greg was and helped her regain self-esteem.
- Bystanders could have helped her explain that hurtful messages were really being sent by Greg, and advised her to change her password.
- Bystanders could have given her support and someone to talk with when she felt isolated.

**5.** In Shannon's story how did Greg use a combination of digital dating abuse tactics and traditional dating abuse and violent tactics to shift power and control in his favor? Do you think that most digital dating abuse takes place without at least some offline dating abuse tactics as well?

- This question has no right answer. It explores the students' impressions and experiences with digital abuse and dating abuse generally. It is an opportunity to learn from the students. Getting a response from all of the small groups will help define the rest of the lesson and identify areas where additional resources and materials can be helpful.

# HANDOUT

## SHANNON'S STORY

We began dating at camp. He spent a whole weekend helping me recover files when my laptop died. Then, he helped me upload everything to Flickr and Facebook before the hard drive died entirely, so that I would have a back-up and a spare copy of all my pics and files.

Those first two months were incredible. We exchanged passwords. He said that people who loved each other didn't have secrets. I thought this was taking our relationship to a new level. But once school started everything changed. Greg didn't like my girlfriends from school. He said they were a bad influence on me. He made me stop seeing them. He wouldn't let me have guy friends either. He'd call me "stupid," saying that these other guys only wanted one thing. He would check my cell phone and my texts, yelling at me if they were from guys. He yelled a lot. Sometimes he would throw things or break them. He was always asking me about other guys. I never gave him any reason to be jealous. I did what I could to keep him happy.

But he was always suspicious - logging into my accounts, reading my private messages. He would deny friend requests from anyone he didn't like. He would edit my page, removing pictures he thought were too "sexy." He would change my status when he was mad at me to say "Shannon is stupid." And he would block certain senders, change my buddy lists, and delete IMs before I could even see them. He would send me text messages all day long, asking where I was and who I was talking to. If I didn't answer right away, he would get really mad and yell at me. And he called my friends names, sometimes even to their face.

Greg always apologized afterwards. He explained that he loved me too much to share me. He said that he was doing this for my own good. "Slutty" friends could reflect badly on me, he explained. Better to cut them off. I listened because I loved him and didn't want to make him mad. But it was getting worse. He would accuse me of cheating if I accepted any friend requests from guys, and he'd make me unfriend them. I also couldn't have any guys on my buddy list. Basically, I had no one other than Greg. He said that he should be enough for me. The texts would arrive day and night - "What are you doing? Don't even think about cheating! You're mine!"

He'd threaten to break up with me if I didn't reply that instant. I had to sleep with my cell phone to make sure I didn't miss any texts. Once, I didn't hear a text come in, so he unfriended and blocked me on his Facebook page for a week. He said I was "stupid" about lots of things. I started to believe him. After all, he only did this because he wanted to protect me.

# HANDOUT

One day I posted a group pic of the football team. I took it for the yearbook committee. He went ballistic. He said all the guys would think I was coming on to them and didn't want to be going with a girl that other guys believed was "easy." I begged him to forgive me. I promised to remove the pic as soon as I got home.

I went home and checked my email, and realized I had received a message from Facebook saying my account had been deactivated. I figured it was a tech thing and went to Flickr next. I couldn't believe it. All of my pictures were gone – not just the football team's pic but everything! Family pictures, birthday parties, mom and dad's wedding anniversary, the pictures of my cat, Woody...everything was gone. I couldn't understand what had happened. My "one backup and a spare copy" of these photos were on my Facebook profile, so I tried to log-on to my Facebook and reactivate my account, only to find that my username and password had been changed.

I called Greg and left a voicemail. I explained about the problems with Facebook and Flickr. His text reply was "It's all gone." All gone! How did he know? Then it slowly began to sink in. My one copy and one backup wasn't enough to protect me from an angry Greg. I called Greg's cell phone again and left a message. I told him I could understand him deleting all the material about the dance but not everything else. I told him it wasn't fair. He texted me back a few minutes later. "I'll come and get you at 8. We'll talk then." I was so relieved.

He showed up and told me he was sorry. He explained that "deactivated" wasn't the same as "deleted." You could restore it completely whenever you wanted. He told me that he loved me, but needed to teach me a lesson for my own good. I started crying. He reached over and held me, kissing me. I was still in shock. I wasn't sure what to think or feel, all I could do was cry.

Greg reached into the back seat for a bouquet of flowers. He promised never to leave me and hoped I had learned how much he cared about me. He surprised me with a slide show on his laptop with our favorite songs and pictures of us at camp and kissing at the dance. I cried again. I didn't know what to do.

# HANDOUT

## LOOKING AT SHANNON AND GREG'S SITUATION

**Directions:** In your small group, respond to the following questions or only to the one question assigned to your small group, as well as to question 5.

- 1.** Cite at least three specific examples of Greg's misuse of power in "Shannon's Story"—make sure that at least two examples are digital.
  - a.**
  - b.**
  - c.**
- 2.** When Greg does explode, what types of abusive behaviors online and offline does he engage in?
- 3.** After the abuse, what does Greg tell Shannon to justify the abusive behavior and shift the blame for the abuse to her? Why do you think this is an effective tactic on Greg's part? How does it help him control Shannon's actions? Identify how Greg strategically used digital abuse to attack Shannon's self-esteem.
- 4.** Bystanders play an important role in helping the target. How did Greg use digital abusive tactics to isolate her from her friends and potentially helpful bystanders? (How could bystanders have helped?)
- 5.** In Shannon's Story how did Greg use a combination of digital dating abuse tactics and traditional dating abuse and violent tactics to shift power and control in his favor? Do you think that most digital dating abuse takes place without at least some offline dating abuse tactics as well?

# HANDOUT

## THE 20 QUESTIONS

Passwords, when misused, can be a serious threat to students who quickly find their accounts hacked, taken over, or have messages sent to their friends in their name. While 70% of polled students told WiredSafety that they share their passwords with their friends, others have passwords or secret questions that can be easily guessed. We find that most passwords are created from this list. Is your password formed from these 20 questions? How many of your friends know the answer to these? How hard will it be for them to guess your password? Too easy!

- 1.** favorite sports team
- 2.** where you go to school
- 3.** pet's name
- 4.** favorite color
- 5.** lucky number
- 6.** date of birth
- 7.** middle name
- 8.** favorite animal
- 9.** favorite movie
- 10.** favorite band/singer
- 11.** what college you want to go to
- 12.** the year you graduate high school
- 13.** best friend's name
- 14.** favorite sports player
- 15.** favorite season
- 16.** shoe size
- 17.** favorite clothing store
- 18.** favorite book
- 19.** dream car
- 20.** dream job

# HANDOUT

## REPORTING DIGITAL ABUSE

Report it or support it. That's your choice. Whether you are the target of digital abuse or merely encounter it with someone you know, or even a stranger online, the faster it is reported the faster the abuse will stop.

First, some quick pointers: If you are being physically threatened, you have to take it seriously. Tell your parents, your principal, or your teacher and then call your local police! Make sure that any report to the online service provider includes a request that they "retain the data" so police can review it during an investigation. Otherwise, when the post or profile is deleted, the evidence is often lost.

Save a copy of everything, not just in printed form, but by clicking "save" on your browser and saving the email and text message live. If you are being cyberbullied on a social network you should report it to that social network. Most social networks will have a Report Abuse button or some other report mechanism on their site. Become familiar with how the report abuse approach works on the social networks you use. And remember to Stop, Block, and Tell!

- **Stop** – don't reply. Don't forward it. Don't threaten the abuser. Don't act out in any way.
- **Block** – the sender, message or account so they can't continue to abuse you.
- **And Tell** – a trusted adult (parents, teachers, guidance counselors, older siblings, aunt and uncles or health professionals) and the site used in the digital abuse or provider where the digital abuse came from.

Some console game systems also have built-in mechanisms for their users to report abuse. A good example is Microsoft's X-Box 360. To learn more about how you can report abuse on Xbox Live, visit their code of conduct for US users: [www.xbox.com/en-US/legal/codeofconduct.htm](http://www.xbox.com/en-US/legal/codeofconduct.htm).

If you receive an abusive, threatening, or gross email or IM, the only recourse you may have is to report the person responsible to his or her email service provider, IM provider or Internet Service Provider (ISP). If the actions violate the terms of the provider, he or she may lose the account or have it suspended temporarily. You start by visiting their ISP, IM or email service provider's terms of service or terms of use section. There, read the policy carefully. Make notes about which sections you believe were violated and how. Copy and paste the section that applies to the communication you are reporting.

In the majority of cases, the websites also have an email address posted to send violation reports to. If they don't, you can usually use "abuse@[name\_of\_ISP\_goes\_here]" or "tos@[ISP name]" to make the report. Copy yourself on the email so you have a permanent record of what you sent, where you sent it, and when.

Many IM providers and social networks also have a "report abuse" button you can click. Try and save a copy of whatever you send. Don't expect too much, though. It has been

# HANDOUT

WiredSafety's experience that most networks are reluctant to act on a first contact, if at all. And they have good reasons for this. Sometimes the cyberbully poses as the victim, in an attempt to get the network to unknowingly assist in the harassment. It is also typical that some of the "evidence" being provided has been fabricated, or has been "enhanced" to be more serious than it actually is. There are also privacy and legal considerations that they must consider. And they receive hundreds of thousands of Terms of Service (TOS) reports and have to prioritize them. Marking any abuse report with the kind of abuse you are reporting – "cyber bullying," "sexual predator," "suicide threat," etc., will help them recognize the more important reports and act on them more quickly.

## How Can I Improve My Chances of Getting a Response or Having the Network or Service Provider Take Action?

The likelihood of getting a response and their taking any disciplinary action depends on how well you make your case and the policy of the site. Many don't respond, other than an auto-responder telling you that your abuse report was received. So, don't hold your breath waiting for a formal report on your complaint.

But you have a good chance of having them take action if you take a few minutes to get your ducks in a row. All reports should follow the rules that the ISP, social network, game or email provider sets out in their report Terms of Service (TOS) information. Check and double check to make sure you have all the information they ask for and have clearly identified whatever you have. **Most ISPs require the following information to be provided, at minimum:**

1. **Date and time** that the violations of their TOS took place (keep each violation separate in the report and make sure you include your time zone).
2. **Copies of emails** (Your "help" instructions with your email application may walk you through it, step-by-step.), IMs or the full and correct URLs of the profile, website, forum, newsgroup, or bulletin board postings (copy the exact address in your browser when you read it, and paste it "as is" into the report).
3. **Screen shots** of offending IMs and profiles (save these also to your computer, as the profile/posting may change and you will need proof of what used to be there).
4. **A time-line** of how the situation developed, including copies of all communications. (Using a monitoring application can be very helpful here).
5. **Any information** you can provide as to what steps, if any, you have taken to try to deal with this before reporting it to them.

Don't tell them things about a certain harasser you know in real life or make unfounded accusations unrelated to the communications. Don't rant and rave. Also, do not ask them for the identity of the harasser. They are not permitted to give out that information except through valid legal process.

You need to follow up in a few days if you have not received any response other than an "auto responder" and the situation is continuing. Check first, since they may not send

# HANDOUT

a follow-up email, but may have taken down the content or shut down the offending account.

Be firm and consistent when you follow-up. Remind them of the previous report or email, or resend it marked as “resent on [fill in the date]”. Always copy yourself on these reports for your own records. Do not copy help groups, the FBI or others on the correspondence. Be focused and clear and you will probably get the help you need.



**LESSON 4:**  
**ENDING TEEN DATING ABUSE**

**PURPOSE:** To learn strategies for getting help if one is the target of dating abuse, as well as strategies that friends and family members of targets and abusers can employ.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- identify three steps that an individual abused in a dating relationship can take to increase his or her safety
- describe the excuses that abusers commonly use to rationalize their behaviors
- identify strategies for reaching out to a friend who is abusing someone
- identify resources, organizations, and people that they can turn to for help (i.e., loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline or thesafespace.org)

## MATERIALS

Read “Teacher Background Information: Protecting the Safety of Young People in Abusive Dating Relationships” (appears later in this lesson) before teaching this lesson.

- Photocopy “Increasing Your Safety in an Abusive Dating Relationship” for all students
- Distribute loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline wallet cards to each student available to download at [www.loveisrespect.org/resource-center/tasc/](http://www.loveisrespect.org/resource-center/tasc/)
- Photocopy “Reaching Out to a Friend Who Is Abusing Someone” for all students
- Photocopy “Possible Warning Signs in Relationships” for all students

# ACTIVITIES

## STEP ONE (10 minutes)

Explore what teens in abusive dating relationships can do to increase their safety.

- Tell students that ending an abusive dating relationship can be very difficult and dangerous. It is not unusual for a young person to leave his or her partner several times, then get back together again, before leaving for the final time.
- Remind students about the characters Caitlin and Nick, whom the class read about in Lesson 2. Explain that even if Caitlin wasn't ready to end her relationship with Nick, there are things she could do to increase her safety. Ask students what some of those things might be. (Sample answers include: try not to be alone with Nick; talk to a friend, family member, teacher, counselor, or clergy member about her situation; create a teen dating safety plan; join a support group.)
- Give each student a copy of “**Increasing Your Safety in an Abusive Dating Relationship.**” Review the handout. Emphasize that even when someone is planning to end—or has already ended—an abusive relationship, he or she should continue use of these precautions in case the abuser attempts to commit additional violence. Consider stressing that the most dangerous time for the target is when he or she has left the relationship.
- Distribute one loveisrespect, National Dating Abuse Helpline wallet card to each student. Explain that the card is sized to fit in a wallet and that it contains a toll-free phone number and website for assistance with teen dating abuse and violence issues.

## STEP TWO (25 minutes)

Identify strategies for reaching out to a friend or family member who is abusing a partner.

- Mention that students may not only know someone who is being abused, but also someone who is being abusive to a partner.
- Explain that abusers often use excuses to explain away—or rationalize—their abusive behavior. Ask students for examples of excuses that abusers might use to convince themselves and others that the abuse is not happening or is not a problem. Sample answers may include:
  - It's not really abuse.
  - I didn't mean to hurt him (or her).
  - It was a fluke. It'll never happen again.
  - She (or he) got me so angry, I had to do it.
  - She (or he) likes it.
  - I can't control myself when I get mad.

- I only did it because I was stressed out/drunk/high.
- Give each student a copy of “**Reaching Out to a Friend Who Is Abusing Someone.**”
- Review the top portion of the handout with the class, as well as the directions on the bottom. Have students work in groups of three to rewrite the dialogue.
- After 10 minutes, have one or two small groups role-play using their rewritten dialogue with the class. Use the tips that appear on the top of the handout to assess the strategies that the group devised for Ethan to use in reaching out to Jimmy.

## **STEP THREE** (9 minutes)

**Identify strategies for reaching out to a friend or family member who is abusing a partner.**

- Explain that students will now reflect on what young people can do to help stop the cycle of teen dating abuse.
- Write the following question on the board:  
What can teenagers do in their relationships with friends and family members, in school, and in their community to help prevent teen dating abuse and violence?
- Tell students to copy the question in their journal and to write their responses.
- Some sample ideas for what teenagers can do:
  - Don’t use language that promotes abusive attitudes and behaviors.
  - Don’t support degrading or sexist jokes and put-downs by laughing at them—even if someone you like told the joke or made the put-down.
  - Don’t purchase or listen to music with degrading or sexist lyrics—even if you like the musician who performs it.
  - Think about how your own attitudes and behaviors might contribute to violence and abuse.
  - Be an example for your peers: treat your friends, boyfriend or girlfriend, and family members with respect.
  - Discourage friends from using social media sites, internet blogs, IM, text, or other devices to put down, harass, intimidate, or bully other people.
  - Talk about dating abuse with (and be a role model for) children younger than you.
  - Support other people who are working to end dating abuse and violence by attending a dating abuse awareness event.
  - Become active in teen dating abuse prevention efforts in your school and community.
  - Don’t turn away from a target.
  - Don’t ignore the issue.
- Explain that bystanders to dating abuse may be reluctant to speak up because they:
  - Don’t want to get involved in someone else’s business.
  - Feel powerless to help others make changes.
  - Are afraid the abuser will retaliate against them.

## **STEP FOUR** (1 minute)

### **Conclusion.**

- Explain that abuse and violence are a part of many teen dating relationships. In this curriculum, the class has learned what dating abuse is, as well as strategies to be used for young people who are in abusive relationships, and for those who have a friend or family member who's a target or an abuser. Mention that you're looking forward to seeing how students use their new skills and strategies to reduce dating abuse in the community.

### **ASSIGNMENT :**

Give each student a copy of “Possible Warning Signs in Relationships.”

**OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT:** Have students work with a partner to create a script for a dialogue between Kaylie (the teenager whose boyfriend Jimmy grabbed and twisted her wrist in the handout “Reaching Out to a Friend Who Is Abusing Someone”) and a friend of Kaylie’s who knows about the abuse. If time allows, have a few students read aloud their script to the class.

# HANDOUT

## INCREASING YOUR SAFETY IN AN ABUSIVE DATING RELATIONSHIP

If you are in an abusive relationship, whether you decide to stay in the relationship or leave, you need to think about steps to take to increase your safety.

**Talk with a trustworthy adult** (e.g., parent, guardian, teacher, counselor, clergy member) about what you are experiencing. Doing so can help you to feel less isolated.

**Create a dating safety plan.** A dating safety plan helps people who are experiencing dating abuse and violence to think about safety strategies. Safety plans enable individuals to think ahead about steps to take that may help keep them safer during a dangerous incident. Visit [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org) to download A Teen's Guide to Safety Planning or contact [loveisrespect](http://loveisrespect.org), National Dating Abuse Helpline.

**Call the police.** If someone is hurting you or you are in immediate danger, it may be best to call the police. Many acts of physical and sexual dating violence are crimes; the abuser can be arrested and go to jail for them.

**Get a restraining order or a protective order.** A restraining order (also called a protective order) is a court order that makes it illegal for the abuser to harm you, come near you, or contact you in any way. When you have an order, you can call the police as soon as the abuser comes near you or contacts you. To find out about the laws in your state, visit [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org).

If your home is not a safe place and/or you live with the abuser, consider going to a domestic violence shelter.

**A shelter is a safe place.** It's usually a house or apartment in a secret location, where people experiencing dating abuse or domestic violence and their children can live for a limited time. Staff at the shelter can help you find a more permanent place to live.

**Call National Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 or 1-866-331-8453 (TTY) and visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) or [wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org) for more information.**

# HANDOUT

## REACHING OUT TO A FRIEND WHO IS ABUSING SOMEONE

(Page 1 of 2)

If you have a friend who is an abuser and you feel safe talking to him or her about it, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Explain that you are still the person's friend, but that you don't like it when he or she is abusive to someone.
- Do not accept the abuser's excuses for the abuse. Say clearly that abuse is never okay.
- Encourage the friend to find a counselor whom he or she can trust. Offer to go with him or her to meet the counselor.
- When you see your friend treat his or her partner with respect, acknowledge and praise the good behavior.
- Do not act as a "go-between" to help the couple work things out.

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Jimmy and Ethan have been friends since elementary school. Everyone at school knows that Jimmy and his girlfriend, Kaylie, argue a lot and that things are often tense between them. This morning, Ethan got a ride to school with Jimmy and Kaylie. As Ethan got out of the car in the school parking lot, he heard Jimmy whisper fiercely to Kaylie, "Remember what I said." Then Jimmy grabbed Kaylie's wrist and twisted it hard. Ethan decides that it's time for him to speak up.

# HANDOUT

(page 2 Of 2)

**DIRECTIONS:** In your small group, complete the dialogue between Ethan and Jimmy, using the tips from the previous handout for reaching out to a friend who is an abuser.

**Ethan:** Jim, man, what's up between you and Kaylie?

**Jimmy:** Nothing. What are you talking about?

**Ethan:** I saw you grab her wrist. What's that about?

**Jimmy:** Ah, c'mon. It's nothing. You know she never listens to me.  
I gotta do that to get her attention.

**Ethan:**

**Jimmy:** I was just playing. It was nothing.

**Ethan:**

**Jimmy:** You don't get it. You wouldn't believe how mad Kaylie makes me.  
Sometimes I just can't control myself.

**Ethan:**

**Jimmy:** You know, it was a one-time thing. It's not going to happen again.

**Ethan:**

**Jimmy:**

**Ethan:**

**Jimmy:**

# HANDOUT

## CREATING YOUR OWN DATING BILL OF RIGHTS

Now that you are aware of what dating abuse is and can recognize the different approaches, take a few minutes to create a list of 'rights' you plan to stand by throughout a relationship. Write down as many as you can think of and share the rights you pledge to uphold (and expect your partner to do the same) with the class. Remember to include some examples from the digital aspect of dating as well.

### I Have The Right To:

### I Pledge To:

For some more examples check out these two sites at home:

1. MTV's A Thin Line: [www.athinline.org/digital-bill-of-rights](http://www.athinline.org/digital-bill-of-rights)
2. Loveisrespect.org: [www.loveisrespect.org/resource-center/teen-dating-bill-of-rights/](http://www.loveisrespect.org/resource-center/teen-dating-bill-of-rights/)

If you wish to take this a step further, declare your class' **Dating Bill of Rights** on Facebook. Simply, go to [www.facebook.com/loveisnotabuse](http://www.facebook.com/loveisnotabuse) and post your suggestions on our page! For those without a Facebook account, you may also email the list to [Loveisnotabuse@liz.com](mailto:Loveisnotabuse@liz.com).

# HANDOUT

## HOMEWORK

### POSSIBLE WARNING SIGNS IN DATING RELATIONSHIPS

If you are in an intimate relationship with someone, is it the healthy situation that you deserve? Put a check next to any of the responses below that apply to this relationship.

Note: It is important to remember that sometimes there are no signs that an intimate partner may become abusive.

Does the person I am with:

- Get extremely jealous or possessive?
- Accuse me of flirting or cheating?
- Constantly check up on me via calls or texts or make me check in?
- Tell me how to dress or how much makeup to wear?
- Try to control what I do and whom I see?
- Try to keep me from seeing or talking to my family and friends?
- Have big mood swings—getting angry and yelling at me one minute, and being sweet and apologetic the next?
- Make me feel nervous, or like I'm walking on eggshells?
- Put me down or criticize me or post things online to embarrass or humiliate me?
- Force me to send nude or otherwise "inappropriate" photos of myself?
- Make me feel that I can't do anything right?
- Make me feel that no one else would want me?
- Threaten to hurt me?
- Threaten to hurt my friends or family?
- Threaten to commit suicide?
- Threaten to hurt him - or herself - because of me?
- Threaten to hurt my pet(s)?
- Threaten to destroy my things?
- Hurt me physically? (includes yelling, grabbing, pushing, shoving, shaking, punching, slapping, holding me down, etc.)
- Break or throw things when we argue?
- Pressure or force me into having sex or going further sexually than I want to?

**If you checked any of these responses, you may be in an abusive relationship. There are resources out there. Loveisrespect and Break the Cycle have teamed up to help young people.**

**For more information, visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).**

Adapted from Break the Cycle, Inc., 2005. [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org)

# TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

NOTE: This Information Is Not Intended For Distribution To Students

## PROTECTING THE SAFETY OF YOUNG ADULTS IN ABUSIVE DATING RELATIONSHIPS

Teens in abusive relationships have options for increasing their safety. They may decide to stay with the abuser, exploring ways to keep themselves safe while still in the relationship. They may decide to end the relationship.

### MAKING A DATING SAFETY PLAN

A dating safety plan helps people who are experiencing dating abuse and violence to think in advance about how to protect themselves from harm instead of trying to figure it out when they are in danger. The plan should be practical and specific. Teenagers who are in the process of ending or have already ended an abusive relationship should create and use a safety plan. (Note that **A Teen's Guide to Safety Planning** is available at [www.thesafespace.org/pdf/handout-safety-plan-workbook-teens.pdf](http://www.thesafespace.org/pdf/handout-safety-plan-workbook-teens.pdf). You may want to share it with students who are in abusive dating relationships. We do not recommend giving the safety plan to all students because abusers might be able to use the plan to notice signs that the person he or she is abusing is planning to leave the relationship, which could potentially put that person in danger.)

**A teenager who remains in an abusive relationship should consider the following strategies:**

- Keep important phone numbers (e.g., police, dating abuse/violence helpline, domestic violence shelter, family, friends) nearby at all times. Always have a cell phone or change for a phone call. If you usually store these numbers in your phone, keep them on paper, too, in case your battery goes dead or you can't access your phone.
- Keep a record of all incidents of the abuse and violence. Save any threatening or harassing letters and email, text, or voicemail messages that the abuser sends.
- Explain to trustworthy friends and family that if they think you may be in danger for any reason, they should call 911.
- Plan escape routes from places like school, home, or the abuser's home.
- Keep phone card/money for a phone card with you at all times.
- Keep subway/bus/taxi fare with you at all times.
- Be aware of the closest emergency room. An emergency room can act as a brief safe haven, enabling you to sit in the emergency room waiting area to consider your next steps.
- Try not to be alone in isolated areas in public. Try to get a ride to school, or ask someone to walk or ride the bus with you.
- Join a support group for teenagers who have experienced dating abuse.
- Put the original and copies of important documents (e.g., identification, health insurance, immigration papers) in a location that cannot be easily found by the abuser.
- Create a new email account and use a password that the abuser will not be able to guess so that the abuser will not be able to read your incoming and outgoing mail.

In addition to the suggestions above, an individual who decides to leave a relationship

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with an abuser should consider the following:

- Go to court to get a restraining order. Keep at least one copy and give copies to the police, school administrators, people at work, etc.
- Tell close family and friends that you are no longer in the relationship.
- Change your school schedule to avoid being in class with the abuser; avoid arriving at and leaving school at the same time as the abuser.
- Screen calls and texts and/or change one's phone number.
- Avoid going to locations where the abuser might look for you.
- Develop a teen dating safety plan. For additional help creating a safety plan, visit [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org) and download **A Teen's Guide to Safety Planning**. [www.thesafespace.org/pdf/handout-safety-plan-workbook-teens.pdf](http://www.thesafespace.org/pdf/handout-safety-plan-workbook-teens.pdf).

## ACCESSING SHELTER, COUNSELING, AND/OR OTHER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

Many communities have resources for individuals experiencing domestic and dating violence, such as confidential emergency shelters, counseling services, and support groups. Some domestic violence organizations will serve teenagers as well as adults. For help in finding youth-friendly domestic violence resources in your area, contact [loveisrespect](http://loveisrespect.org), National Dating Abuse Helpline ([loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)) or call 1-866-331-9474 or 1-866-331-8453 (TTY).

## ACCESSING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Teens who experience dating violence can seek help from the legal system, typically by using either the civil law, the criminal law, or both. These options are very different. All states provide some protection from domestic violence in both the criminal and civil law, but the details of the 56 protections available vary greatly from state to state. For help understanding your state's civil and criminal laws, contact Break the Cycle at [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org). For more information specifically about cyberlaw, contact WiredSafety ([WiredSafety.org](http://WiredSafety.org)) or the technology safety project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence ([NNEDV.org](http://NNEDV.org)). You can also find helpful information from Women's Law at [womenslaw.org](http://womenslaw.org).

## THE CRIMINAL LAW: CALLING THE POLICE

Many acts of dating violence are crimes for which the abuser can be arrested and sent to jail. In order to use the criminal law, either the person who experienced the abuse or someone who witnessed it or heard about it must report what happened to the police or the police must have discovered it themselves. Sometimes social networks or websites/services will discover abusive behavior or digital images and report it themselves.

If the prosecutor decides to press charges, a judge or a jury will hear the evidence and the prosecutor's case against the defendant. If the defendant is a minor, he or she is typically tried in juvenile court. If the defendant is found guilty, a judge determines the sentence (e.g., prison or jail time, probation, community service, counseling, a fine).

In most states, when a defendant is convicted of a crime related to domestic violence, the judge may also issue a criminal protective order requiring the abuser to stay away from the person he or she has harmed and not contact him or her in any way. Criminal

# TEACHER BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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protective orders are an important option for adolescents who live in a state that does not allow young people, people who are dating, or same sex-couples to obtain civil domestic violence restraining orders. Protective orders can also include restrictions on digital communications and activities.

## THE CIVIL LAW: OBTAINING A RESTRAINING ORDER

People who experience abuse can also use civil law for protection from the abuser. In this case, the person who was abused asks to be protected from the abuser by a restraining order. A restraining (also called protective) order is a court order that makes it illegal for the abuser to harm, come near, or contact the target in any way. Restraining orders often can also serve to protect a person's children or other people who live in his or her home. With a restraining order, the person who has experienced abuse can call the police as soon as the abuser comes too close or contacts him or her in any way. In most states, violation of a restraining order is a crime.

In order to qualify for a domestic violence restraining order, an individual must have a "domestic" relationship with the abuser. Many state laws do not include the kind of relationships teenagers typically have (such as people who are dating but not living together) in their definition of domestic relationships. Additionally, some state laws do specify that their restraining orders are only available to adults. Teenagers considering a restraining order need to find out if they qualify for one in their state and whether they need to have an adult involved. When a minor doesn't want to (or is afraid to) tell a parent about the abuse, he or she may be able to have another adult (e.g., a relative, friend, or teacher) go to court instead of a parent. Contact Break the Cycle ([help@breakthecycle.org](mailto:help@breakthecycle.org)) to learn more about the laws in your state or to identify local resources for legal assistance.

## CHILDREN WHO WITNESS VIOLENCE

In as many as half of the families experiencing domestic violence, children are abused as well.<sup>1</sup> Children who witness domestic violence suffer in much the same way as children who are abused themselves: They tend to experience increased risk of truancy, health problems, suicide attempts, emotional distress, criminal behavior, drug and alcohol problems, and intergenerational violence. Even infants in violent households suffer disruptions in sleep, feeding, and emotional bonding.<sup>2</sup> Although some children who are exposed to domestic violence appear to be somewhat resilient, research on long-term effects is, as yet, non-existent.

Many services for individuals who experience domestic violence have expanded their programs to accommodate the needs of mothers with infants and young children. If the children have been abused as well, or if they are at imminent risk of abuse, the local child protection agency may intervene to protect them. People who work in programs for abused individuals may be required by state law to report suspected child abuse.

Contact Child Help USA (Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD or [childhelp.org](http://childhelp.org)) to learn more about programs and services for the prevention and treatment of child abuse.

1 Fact Sheet: Domestic Violence and Young Children, Action Alliance for Children, available at [www.4children.org/news/7-97fact.htm](http://www.4children.org/news/7-97fact.htm).  
2 "The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children," Family Violence Prevention Fund, [endabuse.org](http://endabuse.org), accessed 7/3/07.

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