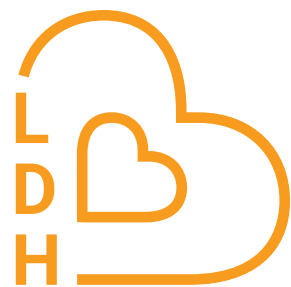




## **A Guide on Teenage Dating Violence**



# What is Teenage Dating Violence?

Teenage dating violence is an issue for so many teens in the United States and around the world. Teenage Dating Violence is unreported because either the victim doesn't realize that the behavior they are experiencing is abusive or they are too afraid to say anything.

A major problem is people don't talk about teen dating violence. Why? First, it seems that adults expect teens to know what healthy relationships look like and assume teens would be able to detect and identify abusive behaviors. We don't assume kids will know how to do algebra without teaching them, right? Then we should not assume teenagers know how to handle an unhealthy relationship. Parents don't expect that their own child will be a victim of dating abuse and the issue is never discussed.

Unfortunately, the lack of awareness leads to a lack of knowledge and skills in building healthy loving relationships and protections from unhealthy ones. Some adults are victims of abusive relationships and can't teach what a healthy relationship looks like.

Children who grow up in an abusive family may view this type of behavior as the norm. Although, even those who grow up in a healthy and happy family can find themselves in an abusive relationship and not know how to handle it.

It is imperative to educate our children and empower them not to accept abusive behavior just because you are in a relationship.

This type of education must start at an early age and be developmentally appropriate for the child. Teaching children at a young age about boundaries and how to ask for help, will make it easier for them to handle these difficult types of situations that may arise as they get older.

Dating someone does not give them the right to be "overprotective". Let's get into what Teenage Dating Violence is and what it looks like.



## What is Teenage Dating Violence?

It is a type of intimate partner violence between two people in a close relationship. These are the types of behaviors:

- 👤 **Physical Abuse** is any intentional use of physical touch to cause fear, injury through hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, strangling or using another type of physical force to injure their partner.
- 👤 **Sexual Abuse** is forcing or attempting to force without willing, active, unimpaired consent to a partner to take part in a sex act, sexual touching, sexual assault, rape or a nonphysical sexual event (e.g. sexting).
- 👤 **Psychological Aggression/Verbal and Emotional Abuse** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person. This includes behaviors like threats, insults, screaming, constant monitoring or isolation.
- 👤 **Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention, being watched, followed, monitored or harassed. This type of contact by a partner causes fear or concern for one's own safety of the safety of someone close to them.
- 👤 **Digital Abuse** is using technology to bully, stalk, threaten, or intimidate a partner using texting, social media, apps, and tracking. It can also include repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner without consent.

Let's start with **physical abuse** which is the most common type of abuse that people think of when talking about dating violence. It is just as it sounds, the abuser will use physical touch to cause physical harm or injury to their partner. The list above is not an exhaustive list of all the things a person can do that is physically abusive. It doesn't have to be a slap across the face to be considered physical abuse. An abuser can hold you down on the ground and not let you leave, they could squeeze your arm or hand really tight. The abuser can do things physically that cause fear to the victim. They may put their hands around someone's neck and threaten to strangle them but never actually "injure" their partner-that is still physical abuse. No one has the right to put their hands on you and cause bodily harm, for any reason, ever!

**Physical abuse** is not just damaging to the body but also mentally and emotionally as well. Abusers may use just the threat of violence to get what they want. Victims are often in fear of what their abusers may do to them if they were to get upset. This is used as a way to control their partner's behavior and show that the abuser is in charge.

**Sexual abuse** is forcing (or attempting to force) a partner to unwillingly engage in sexual behaviors. If a partner is impaired and they were not able to give consent to the sexual acts then any sexual behavior that takes place is abuse. A partner needs to be of full mind and capable of giving consent. According to West's Encyclopedia of American Law, Consent is an act of reason and deliberation. In which a person must possess and exercise sufficient mental capacity to make an intelligent decision. This means that a person has to be unaltered, either by some type of substance or to be in a state that may impair their ability to make sound decisions or by giving in to the advances. The People's Law Dictionary defines consent as a voluntary

agreement to another's person's proposition and to voluntarily agree to an act or proposal of sexual relations.

If a partner, at any time, says "No I don't want to do that" then that should be taken as their final answer and not asked again. Many times the abuser will ask over and over again to perform a sexual act, sometimes they may even make fun of them for not being willing to engage in sexual activities to try and persuade them to change their mind. It's important to stress that no means no and if a partner doesn't respond at all, it should be taken as a no. Just because a partner doesn't say the word "No" doesn't mean they have given you consent.

Here is where education and empowerment come in.

Educate young teens that 1) you have the right to say no, 2) your body belongs to you and no one is allowed to touch it if you say no and 3) you do not have the right to touch someone who is impaired and cannot give consent. No one is allowed to touch you in any way without your consent, ever. One should never feel pressured into making a decision they don't want to or allow someone to touch them sexually because they are afraid of making the other person upset.

Parents and schools may address the issues of Sex Ed, the anatomy of boys and girls, what sex is, how someone could become pregnant, etc. All of those things are important but what also needs to be addressed is how to express your personal sexual boundaries and what can you do if someone attempts to touch you in a way you do not want. Empowering boys and girls to make decisions about their own body and that it is ok to look for help if needed. The cultural stigma of coming forward is often why individuals never say anything. The victim may be embarrassed, may feel like they did something wrong, may believe it was their fault or will be seen in a bad light. Coming forward and reporting sexual abuse or just asking for help on how to express your sexual boundaries is so brave and shows confidence in who you are.

The other major part of sexual abuse is sexting. Sexting refers to an act of sending sexually explicit materials through mobile phones. The word is derived from the combination of two terms sex and texting. Sexting is a punishable offence in the U.S., a teenager texting sexually explicit photographs of themselves, or of their friends or partners, can be charged with distribution of child pornography and those who receive the images can be charged with possession of child pornography.. This is an important topic because although there may be no physical sexual contact made, a partner may pressure someone into sending sexual photos of themselves or engage in sexual discussions. It is important to remember that consent is involved in sexting and that if you are a minor you can be charged with child pornography if you obtain any pictures of an under-age teen in any kind of sexual pictures or videos.

**Psychological Aggression/Verbal and Emotional Abuse** is the use of verbal and non-verbal communication



with the intent to harm another person mentally or emotionally and/or exert control over another person. This includes behaviors like threats, insults, screaming, constant monitoring or isolation. Psychological aggression is a manipulation tactic that abusers use to control their partner. It is important to note that this type of abuse can be done with the use of verbal threats/behaviors and nonverbal threats/behaviors. Verbal and emotional abuse can be one of the hardest to detect because it can start in a very subtle way and can be hard to notice at first. Especially for teenagers, who may be in a relationship for the first time. It can be hard to know what type of behavior is ok to accept. Abusers may start out small and say discreet things to test boundaries and see what they can get away with. As the relationship goes on they will increase the frequency and intensity of the verbal or nonverbal abuse.

**Verbal abuse** can consist of put-downs, threats, yelling or raising their voice, which can be done in private or public. Abusers can use threats of physical harm to their partner, threats to end the relationship, destroy property, or even to hurt themselves. Non-verbal abuse can consist of slowly isolating their partner away from family and friends or monitoring their partner's location and activities. Cell phones can allow direct contact to their partner without others seeing their messages. Verbal abuse can also be teasing that is relentless and hurtful to their partner. It may seem like innocent teasing and "having fun" but it is hurting their partner and can cause emotional damage.

**Stalking** is a pattern of repeated, unwanted attention, being watched, followed, monitored or harassed. This type of contact by a partner causes fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone close to them. Partners can be stalked while they are in current relationships or by partners in a relationship that has ended. Many times stalkers use technology (cellphones and social media sites) to stalk you by sending unwanted email or messages. One way a current partner could stalk someone is to have access to their location on their cell phone. That behavior is very common with the use of cell phones and how easy it is to have access to someone's location. Posting to social media where you are can let someone know how to find you and a stalker will use your posts to continue to contact you. It is very scary to have someone show up at a location when you did not tell them where you were going to be, or leaving you notes or gifts after you told them to stop.

**Digital Abuse** is using technology to bully, stalk, threaten, or intimidate a partner using texting, social media, apps, and tracking. It can also include repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner without consent. Digital abuse has exploded in the last 15 years with the increase of cell phones and social media outlets. Young teens, even age 10, have their own cell phones which gives them access to unmonitored activity on the internet and text messages. Digital abuse can be between partners but also the abuser could send intimidating/threatening messages to anyone who tries to contact their partner.

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National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Division of Violence Prevention

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Break The Cycle

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# Teenage Dating Violence Statistics

When you take the time to look, you will find the statistics of how prevalent teenage dating violence is in this county and around the world. Even when you see the numbers, it's hard to put that into people, real people, real lives that are being negatively affected by this type of abuse at such a young age. These lives are forever changed because of what they have had to endure, and many times endure alone in the shadows of shame, fear and guilt.

As you read through the statistics, remember that many times victims do not report the abuse. These numbers could be so much higher what is reported. There has to be a cultural shift to empower those affected to report the abuse to help them end the violence. I challenge you to take your time reading through the statistics and remembering that these young girls and boys are just that, young girls and boys trying to navigate through a tremendously difficult situation without any idea of how to handle it.



## DATING VIOLENCE IS A WIDE SPREAD ISSUE

Teenage Dating Violence (TDV) is an issue that is affecting so many teenagers across the United States and globally. Due to the nature of the relationship involved it can be very difficult to get those affected to report the abuse or even know what they are experiencing as abuse. Teenagers in your town, in your community are dealing with abuse every day and we just aren't aware of it. Teenage Dating Violence doesn't care if you are rich, poor, what ethnicity you are or where you live; we are all affected by this type of abuse.

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Severe physical violence can include being kicked, choked, burned on purpose, a weapon used against them, etc.(1)
- An estimated 8.5 million women in the U.S. (7%) and over 4 million (4%) reported experiencing physical violence, rape or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetime and indicated that they first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before the age of 18 according to the National Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Survey. To put this in perspective millions of young teens deal with abusive behaviors before they even graduate from high school. They have experienced such difficult trauma at such a young age, that can affect them for the rest of their lives.(2)

- Approximately one in three adolescents girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner—a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth (3)
- 1 in 10 women in the United States will be raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime (4)
- An estimated 9.7% of women and 2.3% of men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime (4)
- Nearly half of all women and men in the United States will experience psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime (4)
- Globally, as much as 35% of women have experienced intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. (5)

## TEENAGE DATING VIOLENCE STARTS EARLY

It is hard to comprehend a child or teenager being abused by a peer or dating partner. We know that as young a late elementary school and early middle school students are being exposed to abusive behaviors by dating partners. The statistics are very difficult to process but by increasing awareness we will increase the chance that more and more teenagers will know where and how to report abuse.

- More than half of women (69.5%) and men (53.6%) who have been physically or sexually abused, or stalked by a dating partner, first experienced abuse between the ages of 11-24. (6)
- Young women between the ages of 18-24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, almost double the national average. (6)
- Data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) often begins in adolescence. An estimated 8.5 million women in the U.S. (7%) and over 4 million men (4%) reported experiencing physical violence, rape, or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetime and indicated that they first experienced these or other forms of violence by that partner before the age of 18. (7)
- A survey of students in grades 7-12 found that 56% of females and 48% of males reported some form of sexual violence victimization by a peer (e.g., unwelcome comments, touching, or being forced to do something sexual) during the 2010-11 school year. (8)
- One in five tween-age 11 to 14- say their friends are victims of dating violence and nearly half who are in relationships know friends who are verbally abused. Two in five of the youngest tweens, ages 11 and 12, report their friends are victims of verbal abuse in relationships. (9)
- One in five teen girls and one in ten younger teen girls (age 13 to 16) have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves. Even more teen girls, 37%, have sent or posted sexually suggestive text, email or instant messages. (10)
- A study of 8th and 9th grade male and female students found that 25% had been victims of nonsexual dating violence and 8% had been victims of sexual dating violence. (11)
- Young people, 12 to 19 years old, experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault.(23)

## CERTAIN SUBGROUPS SUFFER DISPROPORTIONALLY FROM ABUSE



Although Teenage Dating Violence happens to all groups of people, there are some subgroups that are disproportionately affected. Women, women of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community are affected by a much higher rate.

- 72% of all murder-suicides involved an intimate partner; 94% of the victims of these crimes are women. (14)
- Female students, lesbian, gay and bisexual students and students not sure of their sexual identity reported the highest prevalence estimates across all 5 violence victimization types. (16)
- Data from NISVS indicate that the lifetime prevalence of experiencing contact sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner is 57% among multi-racial women, 48% among Native American women, 48% black women, 37% white women, 34% Hispanic women and 18% Asian-Pacific Islander women. (15)
- The NISVS special report on victimization; 61% of bisexual women, 37% of bisexual men, 44% of lesbian women, 26% of gay men, 35% of heterosexual women, and 29% of heterosexual men experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking from an intimate partner in their lifetimes.(2)
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual youth are more likely to experience physical and psychological dating abuse, sexual coercion, and cyber dating abuse than their heterosexual peers. (17)
- On average more than three women a day are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends in the United States. In 2005, 1,181 women were murdered by an intimate partner. (18)
- Nearly one in four women in the United States reports experiencing violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in her life. (19)
- Women are much more likely than men to be victimized by a current or former intimate partner. Women are 84% of spouse abuse victims and 86% of victims of abuse at the hands of a boyfriend or girlfriend and about ¾ of the persons who commit family violence are male.(20)
- Young women age 20 to 24 also experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault, followed by those 16 to 19. People age 18 and 19 experience the highest rates of stalking.(20)
- American Indian and Alaska Native women experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. (21)
- Overall, the prevalence of dating violence was higher among black (12.2%) and Hispanic (11.4%) students compared to white (7.6%) students. (26)
- Almost half (47.5%) of American Indian/Alaska Native women, 45.1% of non-Hispanic Black women, 37.3 of non-Hispanic White women, 34.4% of Hispanic women, and 18.3% of Asian-Pacific Islander women experience contact sexual violence, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime. (4)
- 2 in 5 lesbian women, 3 in 5 bisexual women, and 1 in 3 heterosexual women will experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.(4)
- 1 in 4 gay men, 1 in 3 bisexual men, and 3 in 10 heterosexual men will experience rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.(4)

Being a victim of Teenage Dating Violence can have lifelong lasting effects on your physical and emotional health. There are increase chances that victims may engage in risky behaviors that could perpetuate negative life experiences. Many will suffer from PTSD, anxiety, other mental health issues, suicide ideation and many physical health symptoms.

- What are the consequences of Teen Dating Violence: Experience symptoms of depression and anxiety, engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using tobacco, drugs and alcohol, exhibit antisocial behaviors and suicidal ideation. (29)
- Victims of intimate partner violence commonly report negative impacts such as: feeling fearful women 62% and men 18%, concern for their safety women 57% and men 17%, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder women 52% and men 17%. (2)
- Both boys and girls who experience teen dating violence are at greater risk for suicidal ideation. Women who are exposed to partner violence are nearly 5 times more likely to attempt suicide as women not exposed to partner violence. (2)
- There are also many other adverse health outcomes associated with IPV, including a range of cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, reproductive, musculoskeletal, and nervous system conditions, many of which are chronic in nature.(2)
- Survivors of IPV also experience mental health consequences such as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (2)
- IPV survivors are also at higher risk for engaging in health risk behaviors, such as smoking, binge drinking and HIV risk behaviors.(2)
- Women who have experienced domestic violence are 80% more likely to have a stroke, 70% more likely to have heart disease, 60% more likely to have asthma and 70% more likely to drink heavily than women who have not experienced intimate partner violence. (31)
- Women victimized by abuse are more likely to be diagnosed with serious health problems including depression, panic attacks, high risk behaviors such as tobacco and substance abuse and sexual risk taking, as well as migraines, chronic pain, arthritis, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, inconsistent use of birth control and delayed entry into prenatal care.(32)
- High school students who have been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their partner earned grades of C and D twice as often as earning grades of A or B.(6)

## THE DIGITAL WORLD HAS AFFECTED TEENAGE DATING VIOLENCE

The increase use and accessibility of cell phones, internet and apps has changed how teens are being abused in relationships. Digital Abuse has significantly increased in the last 15 years and is a common behavior for perpetrators in the relationship. Victims can be tracked by their phones to their exact locations at all times, putting them in harms way and not even realizing it.

- Teen Dating Violence can take place in person or electronically, such as repeated texting or posting sexual pictures of a partner online without consent.(36)
- Technology has become a quick and easy way for stalkers to monitor and harass their victims. More than one in four stalking victims reports that some form of cyberstalking was used against them, such as email (83 percent of all cyberstalking victims) or instant 2009 messaging (35 percent). Electronic monitoring of some kind is used to stalk one in 13 victims.(37)

- One in five teen girls and one in ten younger teen girls (age 13 to 16) have electronically sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos or videos of themselves. Even more teen girls, 37 percent, have sent or posted sexually suggestive text, email or IM (instant messages). (38)
- More than half of teen girls (51 percent) say pressure from a guy is a reason girls send sexy messages or images, while only 18 percent of teen boys say pressure from a girl is a reason. Twelve percent of teen girls who have sent sexually suggestive messages or images say they felt “pressured” to do so. (39)
- In a study conducted by the Associated Press (AP) and MTV with an online panel of young persons (14-24 years old) that is representative of the U.S. population, 41% of respondents who were in a relationship had experienced some form of digital abuse and nearly one quarter (24%) said they always or sometimes felt that their partner was constantly pressuring them to check-in by e-mail, phone calls and texts.(41)
- One in four teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cell phones and texting.(42)
- One in ten teens (11-18 years old) said a romantic partner had prevented them from using a cell phone, 6% said their romantic partner had posted something publicly online to make fun of, threaten, or embarrass them, and 10.4% of boys and 9.8% of girls said they had received a threatening cell phone message from their romantic partner.(43)

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# Teen Dating Cycle of Abuse

The more times the cycle is completed the less time it takes to complete the cycle. As the cycle is repeated the violence, it usually increased in frequency and severity.

## Phase #1-The Calm

### Abuser

- Increase love and kindness
- Overprotective because they love you
- Acts like nothing ever happened
- No abuse is taking place
- Some promises are being met
- Says they will start counseling

### Survivor

- Feels reassured that it won't happen again
- Has hope that the abuse is over
- Tell yourself "This is why I love him" he treats me so good
- Do things to make them happy

### Examples:

Abuser may act like nothing ever happened, they will not discuss that they hit you, slammed you into a wall, or jumped on top of you

Abuser expresses love and kindness in public and in private

Abuser may say they will go talk with a counselor to get help

Abuser may actually follow through with some promises of better behavior and it makes you feel like they are going to change.

You may find yourself doing things to make them happy. For example, you call or text the moment you get off of work or out of practice to check in because that makes him happy.



## Phase #2-Tension Builds

### Abuser

- Checks phone, social media sites
- Requires you to give them your phone and/or passwords
- Putdowns
- Overprotective in the "name of love"
- Threats/lying
- Controlling behavior/telling you who you can hang out with
- Criticize

- Lack of communication because of things you did
- Isolation-keeps you away from friends and families

### Survivor

- Feel like you are walking on egg shells
- Fearful of partner's responses
- Feels need to keep the peace
- Only hangs out with abuser to keep them calm
- May experience emotional, intimidation and/or threats
- Fear of violence or embarrassment

### Examples:

"I don't like you hanging around other guys because I don't trust them, not you"

"I don't like that outfit at all, you are showing way too much skin, don't wear that again"

Abuser may show up to sports practices or place of employment to make sure you are really there and not speaking to another boy

Abuser may put down your friends and say he doesn't like them and that you are not allowed to hang out with them anymore

Partner doesn't respond to texts and calls and gives you the silent treatment because you did something they did not approve of

"I was looking at your Instagram and saw that some guy commented on your photo, who is he?"

## Phase #3-Abuse Occurs

### Abuser

- Physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse takes place
- Destroys property
- Restricts and controls resources and activities
- Blaming, raging, humiliation and intimidation
- Revenge porn

### Survivor

- Feeling scared, angry, and/or hopeless
- Confused
- Try to protect self
- Tries to deescalate and calm abuser
- May try to leave
- May dissociate

### Examples:

Abuser may slam you against a wall and tell you to stop saying hi to a boy

Abuser may tell you that you are stupid and can't believe you don't understand something

Abuser may post or send intimate pictures you sent him to others without your permission

Abuser may yell at you, threaten you or your family



and friends

Abuser may break your phone so you can't communicate with others

Abuser may convince you to quit a sports team or job so you can spend more time with him.

Abuser may show up at the mall when you are out with friends and take you by the arm and force you to leave

Abuser may tell embarrassing stories to others about you, either in person or online

Abuser may force you to do sexual acts that you are not comfortable with and may even make fun of you for not wanting to

Abuser may blame you for them becoming so upset they physically hurt you

Abuser may say you belong to them and they belong to you

## Phase #4-Honeymoon Stage

### Abuser

- Asks for forgiveness
- Outward expression of love and kindness
- Promises not to do it again
- May promise to get therapy
- May enlist family and friend support
- "I'll never do it again"
- Declares love
- Cries
- Gifts, cards, flowers
- Take you out to dinner
- "I do it because of what you did"
- "I do it because I love you"

### Survivor

- Feeling confused
- Say you will stay if they change
- Feel surge of love from abuser-feel special
- Accepts part of the blame
- Gaslighted to believe it wasn't as bad as it was
- Tells others how kind abuser is

### Examples:

Abuser may promise over and over again to never physically hurt you again

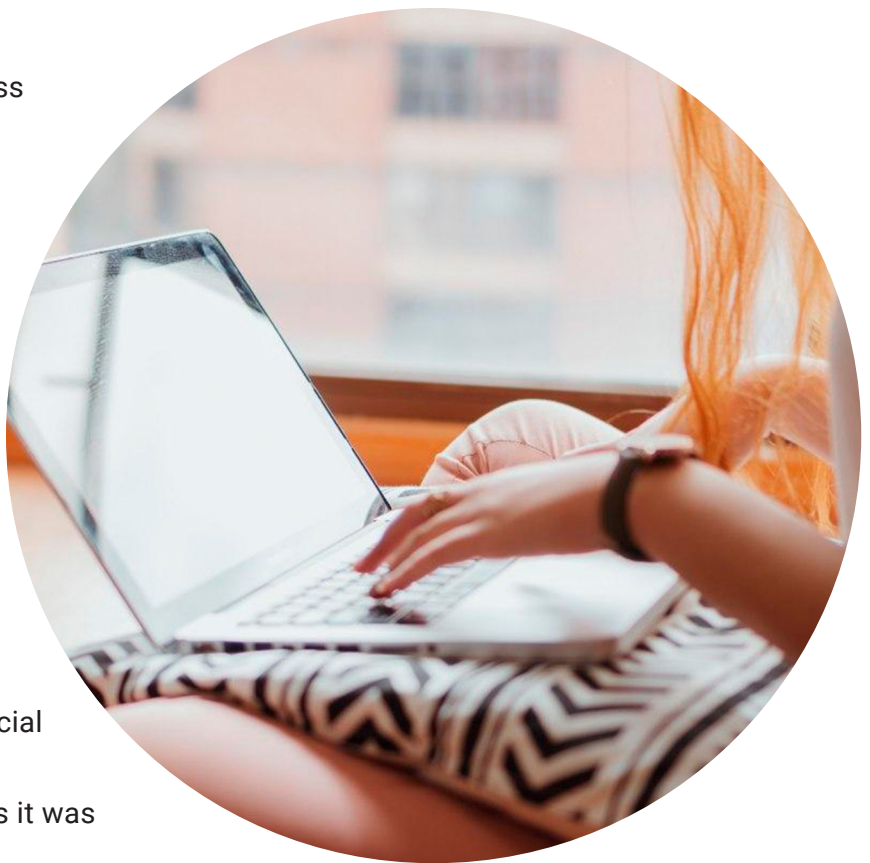
Abuser may say, "It just made me so mad to see you talking to another boy I couldn't handle it, that's why I yelled at you. You shouldn't have done that"

Abuser may breakdown in tears and profusely apologize for their behavior

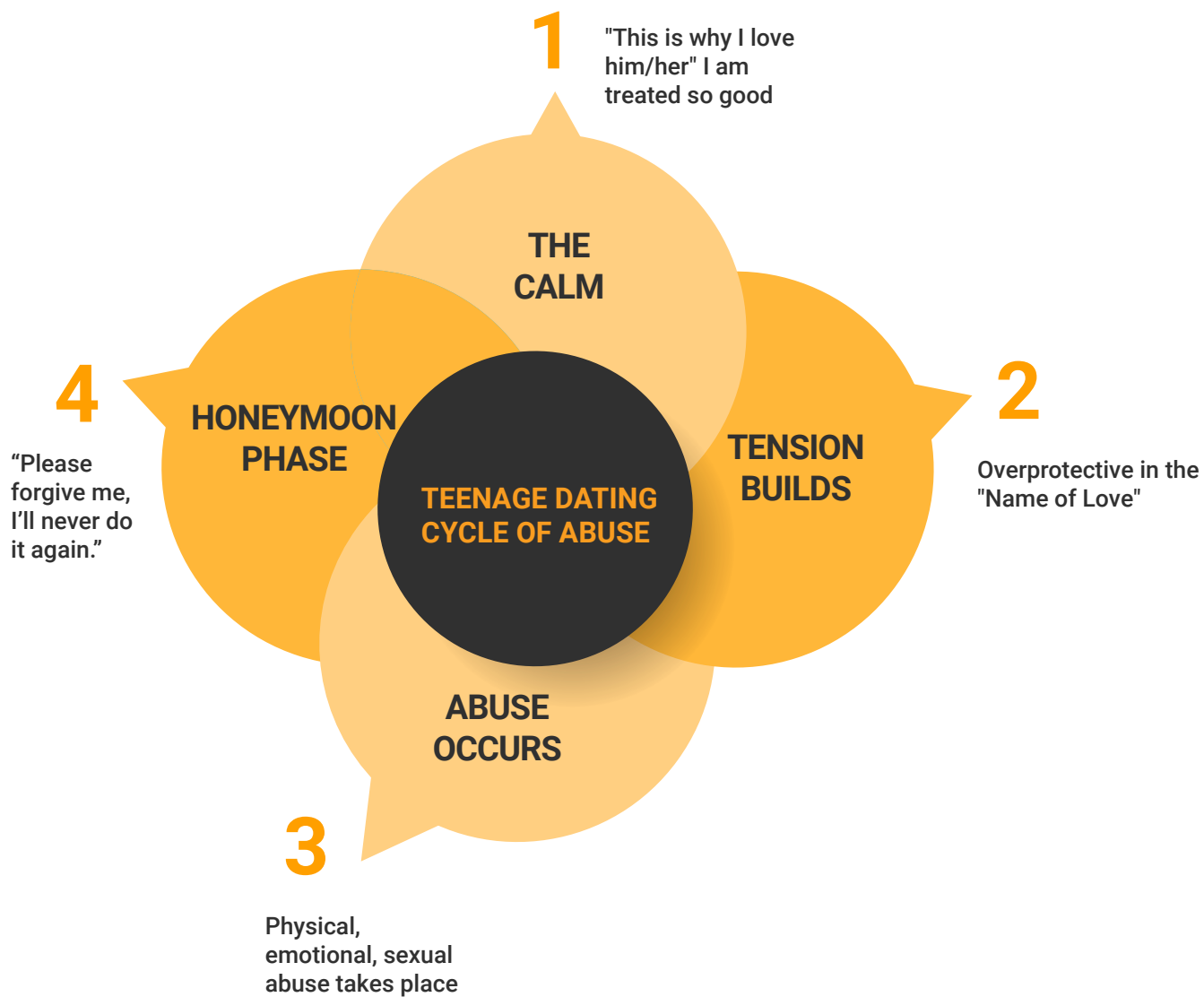
Abuser may bring you flowers, cards and/or presents to apologize and may bring those gifts to school to show everyone else how great of a boyfriend they are

Abuser may take you out to a nice dinner and show you immense kindness and love

Abuser may say no one will ever love you like I do



# Cycle of Abuse





# Where Can I Go to Get Help?

One of the most difficult things to navigate as a teenager in an abusive relationship is: Where do I go for help? Who is safe to help me? Will I get into trouble if I tell anyone? Will I disappoint my parents? Will my partner hurt me for telling someone? How can someone help me? Maybe I'm overreacting and their behavior isn't too bad. These types of questions swirl around in the minds of young adults as they try and figure out how to stay safe and get help at the same time. A very important aspect to mention is that the victim is never at fault, those around the victim need to show complete kindness, understanding and no judgement.

Here are a few places a teenager can go for help when in an abusive relationship:

- Talk to their parents
- Talk to their friends
- Talk to their School Counselor
- Talk to the School Nurse
- Talk to a teacher
- Talk to an administrator at their school
- Talk to a Mental Health Counselor in school or outside of school
- Talk to a School Social Worker
- Talk to the School Resource Officer
- Call the police and make a report
- Call a Domestic Violence Hotline and ask for local shelters
- If in immediate danger, call 911



Alert the school if your child is in an abusive relationship so they can take appropriate measures to keep them safe. Some actions could be:

- Notify teachers of what is going on so they can keep an eye on the student and report any behavior that seems alarming
- Notify their School Counselor so they can have frequent check ins with the student
- The perpetrator's schedule could be changed so they do not have any classes together
- Create a no-contact contract between the perpetrator and the victim. This means that the perpetrator or victim cannot contact each other by phone, text, note, through another friend. There is no contact allowed, even on line through social media or emails.
- If the school has a Mental Health Counselor on campus, seek out their services.

Outside of School you can do the following:

- Call the non emergency line and make a report of suspected abuse
- Call 911 if the student is in immediate harm
- File for a Protection Order through the courts
- Speak to the parents of the partner
- See counseling with a licensed mental health therapist

### **What is a Protection Order?**

A protection order (also referred to as a restraining order) is issued by a judge and orders the perpetrator to stay away from the victim and to have no contact with them.

Teenage Dating Violence (TDV) is a very complicated situation that has many layers to it. For most, it could be their first relationship and there are so many emotions involved. Some may not even realize what they are experiencing is abuse. For those who know, many have no clue how to handle such a difficult situation. So, instead they keep it to themselves and just try and manage the situation on their own. This is where we need to have a shift in our culture. We need to create a safe place for those experiencing this type of abuse to come forward and be cared for with a non-judgmental attitude, support, care and empowerment. When students know that the adults in their school and in their life do not tolerate abusive behavior and they have been taught what to do if they find themselves in this type of relationship, they will be more likely to come forward and ask for help. The stigma has to be removed for victims to come forward and start the healing process.

### **National Dating Abuse Helpline**

1-866-331-9474

1-866-331-8453 (TTY)

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

[www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)

### **Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) Hotline**

1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

# Warning Signs of Teen Dating Violence

Many assume that the symptoms of teenage dating violence would be obvious and easy to see. How can a teenager be in an abusive relationship and others around them not pick up on it? Wouldn't a teenager confide in a close friend, teacher, parent or counselor? Maybe...maybe not. There are some warning signs that parents, teachers, counselors and friends can look out for. Some may be more obvious and some may be very hard to see. The victim of the abuse may work very hard to keep the abuse a secret and show as few signs as possible. Here is a list of some warning signs to look out for:

- Starts spending less time with friends that they usually hang out with
- Grades decline when the teenager typically has good grades
- Starts skipping school or wanting to stay home
- Covering up injuries or can't explain how they got injured
- Stop engaging in activities that they enjoyed previously (sports, clubs, hobbies, work)
- Teenager may seem nervous or anxious around their partner
- Start becoming worried or concerned about upsetting their partner
- Spending an excessive amount of time text messaging, calling, emailing or visiting with their partner
- Starts apologizing for their partner's behavior or making excuses for their behavior
- Starts to develop unexplained medical issues (stomach issues, not sleeping, anxiety, chest pain, etc)
- Develops extreme mood swings



These warning signs can be subtle and even if the teenager is asked directly if they are being hurt in any way they may make a convincing argument that they are fine. Relationships are complicated with new emotions involved and the teenager may be very reluctant to show any warning signs of abuse. Sometimes parents may think they would be able to see the warning signs if their child is in an abusive relationship. Here are some statistics from surveys and studies that show it can be harder than one would think to identify the warning signs of dating abuse:

- In a 2009 survey of parents, three in four parents say they have had a conversation with their teen about what it means to be in a healthy relationship-but 74% of sons and 66% of daughters said they have not had a conversation about dating abuse with a parent in the last year (1)
- More than four in five parents (82%) feel confident 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 (1)

- Of teens in an abusive relationships, fewer than one in three (32%) confide in their parents about their abusive relationship (2)
- In a national online survey of parents with children 11-18 years old, nearly half (45%) had not discussed dating violence with their children in the past year. Reasons parents did not discuss dating violence with their children included they thought their children were too young to talk about it, they would not know what to say, and their children would learn about it through experience

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### Warning Signs

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# How to Develop Healthy Relationships

There is a lot of emphasis on spotting red flags in potentially unhealthy relationships. However, it's important to know what to look for when it comes to spotting a healthy relationship as well. After all, how can you be expected to have a healthy relationship if you don't know what one looks like?

Healthy relationships make us feel good about ourselves and the person we are with. When two people are in a healthy relationship, they will help bring out the best in each other. We often hear that healthy relationships require things like trust, honesty, and communication, but let's talk a bit more about what that actually looks like in practice.

Here are the pillars of a healthy relationship:

## Communication

Open communication is important in every relationship you will ever have but especially with a romantic partner. Partners in healthy relationships can discuss challenges, successes, stressors, and goals on a regular basis. Partners should also feel free and comfortable to bring up concerns in the relationship without fear of a hostile response. The more often a couple communicates kindly and effectively, the better they become at doing so.

## Trust

You should feel confident that your significant other will make safe decisions that reflect the boundaries and standards you have previously discussed. In a healthy relationship, you can trust that your partner will treat you with kindness, respect, and never push your boundaries in an unhealthy way.

## Honesty

You should be able to share how you feel in any situation. Healthy relationships require honesty from both individuals. Feeling the need to hide things isn't healthy. In a healthy relationship, you should feel safe even when sharing bad news or unpleasant information. Communication, trust, and honesty go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other two.

## Respect

Mutual respect is necessary for healthy, positive relationships. Whether it be a romantic relationship, a friendship, or a family member, respect is essential. Mutual respect is even important for a healthy relationship with your current teachers, future bosses, and anyone else you encounter in life. Mutual respect is especially important in romantic relationships or partnerships. You should value your significant other's opinions



and they should value yours. You should feel comfortable setting boundaries with the person you are dating.

### Equality

In a healthy relationship, both parties feel like they have equal say. Both individuals put equal amounts of effort into the relationship and both individuals are able to compromise in a way that feels safe and healthy. Opinions, preferences, and ideas from both individuals always matter in equal measure.

### Comfortable Pacing

When you are in a healthy relationship, it is normal to want to spend time together. It is important that both individuals feel comfortable with the amount of time they spend together and the way the relationship is progressing. In a healthy relationship, you will not feel pressured, rushed, or overwhelmed by the pace of the relationship.

### Independence

Having independence means being free to have hobbies, interests, and friends outside of your relationship. Your significant other doesn't have to be involved in every aspect of your life. You should both be supportive of each other's independent lives.

When trying to identify the pillars of a healthy relationship in your own relationship, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do my significant other and I both feel open to discussing the challenges, successes, stressors, and goals we face in our lives?
- Do I trust that my significant other will always respect my boundaries and treat me with kindness and respect?
- Is my significant other honest with me? Do I feel safe being honest with my significant other?
- Does my significant other treat me with respect?
- Does my significant other treat me as their equal?
- Does my significant other push me to move faster in our relationship than I am ready for?
- Do my significant other and I both have friendships, hobbies, and interests outside of each other?



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### Healthy Relationships

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# Boundaries

Boundaries are a positive and healthy part of any relationship. Healthy boundaries are developed to make sure you remain mentally and emotionally stable. Whether it's a romantic relationship, friendship, family member, or student-teacher relationship, maintaining healthy boundaries is important to the survival of a relationship.

The best romantic relationships have clear and consistent boundaries that are respected by both partners. In addition to setting and enforcing your own boundaries, it is important to listen to your partner's boundaries and always respect them. A lack of boundaries can lead to an unhealthy relationship.

It is important to have boundaries in your life because this lets people know how you would like to be treated. The earlier you set boundaries in your life, the better chance you have at recognizing the people who are not safe to spend time with.

## How To Set Boundaries

### Identify Your Boundaries.

When you have the time and energy, sit down and write out the boundaries you would like to set in your relationships. Make sure your boundaries are clear and based on what is important to you. When creating your boundaries, focus on yourself and what makes you comfortable.

### Share Your Boundaries.

Communicate your boundaries to the people in your life. Let others know how you'd like to be treated and if/when their behavior makes you uncomfortable. You don't need to over-explain your boundaries, just make sure they are clear. You can communicate your boundaries through an email, a message, or face to face. Just choose the delivery method you are most comfortable with.

### Set Consequences.

Decide on the consequences of a broken boundary. This may be difficult to do as we often don't like to upset others. However, it's important to let others know when their behavior is hurtful or uncomfortable for you. It is harder to follow through on boundaries so being prepared is important. Think about what you'd like to say to the person who broke your boundary before starting the conversation. Consequences should be clear and reasonable and something you actually feel comfortable with enforcing.



## Follow Through.

This is the most challenging of the four steps. It's important to show yourself the love and respect you deserve and one of the best ways to do that is by following through when people disrespect your boundaries. It might make things easier if you plan to talk to a friend, therapist, or trusted adult after following through on upholding your boundaries.



## Types of Boundaries

### Physical

Physical boundaries refer to your body and your personal space. This can involve everything from physical violence to public displays of affection.

### Emotional

Emotional boundaries refer to your mental state and emotional well-being. This can involve feeling undervalued, ashamed, guilty, or upset based on your partner's moods instead of your actions or circumstances.

### Intellectual

Intellectual boundaries refer to your opinions, ideas, and beliefs. You should feel safe discussing your thoughts with your partner and know that they will respect you and not talk down to you or belittle you.

### Sexual

Sexual boundaries refer to both physical and non-physical sexual intimacy. This can include sexual comments, touching or contact, and sexual acts.

### Examples of healthy boundaries:

- Example: If you physically hurt me, I will leave and report you.
- Example: If you threaten me, I will leave and report you.
- Example: I don't feel comfortable holding hands when our friends can see us.
- Example: I'm not ready to do that and if you ask again I will leave.
- Example: I don't like when you talk about that part of my body and if you do it again I won't talk to you anymore.
- Example: I don't like being screamed at and I won't participate in a conversation where the other party is screaming.

## References

### Boundaries

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# Safety Planning

The goal in any relationship is for it to be healthy, fulfilling, and rewarding. But what happens when the relationship starts well and then things change? Statistics show that a high number of individuals find themselves in unsafe relationships. We must be vigilant in being prepared for situations that may put us in danger.

It is important to empower yourself with the tools you need to stay safe and seek help when needed

Often when someone is not a safe partner, there are red flags that indicate this. In relationships, a red flag is a sign that the person you are spending time with isn't capable of having a healthy relationship.

Continuing a relationship with multiple red flags at the beginning can lead to emotional and physical danger later on.

The following is a list of red flags to look out for when you are entering or considering entering into a new relationship:


- Embarrassing you in front of other people
- Controlling who you can be friends with
- Controlling where you go or what you do
- Moving too quickly at the beginning of the relationship
- Isolating you from family members and friend.
- Trying to make all of your decisions for you
- Doesn't honor your boundaries
- Excessively jealous
- Accuses you of being unfaithful without merit
- Blaming their abusive behavior on you
- Acting like their abusive behavior isn't happening
- Wants to know where you are at all times
- Obsessively texts and calls you all day
- Threatening to hurt themselves because of something you did
- Threatening to hurt you or kill you
- Shoving or hitting you
- Blames others for their own behavior
- Pressuring you to have sex or do sexual things that you don't want to do
- Trying to stop you from going to school or doing well in school
- Trying to stop you from doing extracurricular activities and clubs
- Has fits of rage when you are alone but is nice around other people



If you find yourself with someone who is showing some of these red flags, there are the steps you need to immediately take:

- If you are currently alone with them, do whatever you have to do to get away and get somewhere safe as soon as possible.
- Let someone you trust, preferably an adult, know what is happening.
- Let the abusive person know through text or email that you will not tolerate their behavior and you will no longer be communicating with them. Let them know not to contact you anymore.
- Block them from communicating with you on all platforms if they won't respect your request.
- If they continue to contact you and you have classes together, let your school counselor know so that they can be moved out of class if necessary.
- If necessary, file a police report. If someone has physically attacked you, you should alert the police. Talk to a trusted adult for help with this step.

When we are in difficult or scary situations, our natural instinct is often to freeze on the spot because of fear. That's why it is important to go over these steps and sometimes even practice what you might say to someone if you found yourself dealing with any of the red flags mentioned above. Going through the list with a friend and talking about what you would do in each situation can help you to be better prepared.



## References

### Safety Planning

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# Trauma Healing, Self-Love, and Empowerment

## Trauma Healing

Emotional and physical trauma can have long-lasting results in our lives. Trauma is defined as being a deeply distressing and disturbing experience. If severe trauma is left untreated, it can be something that you carry around for years and years and can even affect your physical health. Although we can't change the past, we can heal from the past and move past our trauma.

The process of healing from trauma can be somewhat different for everyone. The best healing methods can change from one person to the next. However, most people find that a combination of the following activities are helpful on their healing journey.

## Movement

Severe trauma can disrupt your body's natural equilibrium but exercise and movement can help repair your body's nervous system. Moving your body for just 30 minutes a day can help to improve your mental well-being. Whether it's a 30-minute walk, three 10 minute yoga sessions throughout the day, or spending time playing your favorite sport, there are so many ways to help heal from trauma with movement.

## Breathwork

Breathwork is also a great way to repair your body's nervous system. Something as simple as taking a few deep breaths can help send a signal to let the brain know you are safe and don't currently need to use the fight, flight, or freeze response. To try deep breathing, sit somewhere comfortable and close your eyes. Take a deep breath through your nose and inhale for a count of four. Gently exhale while counting to six. Now breathe in for a count of six and gently exhale while counting to eight. Try a few more breaths until you feel more calm. You can set a timer and do this for five minutes every day or a few times a week.

## Doing Volunteer Work

Helping others is a great way to reclaim your sense of power after experiencing trauma. When volunteering, you remember your positive qualities and have a sense of fulfillment. People who volunteer often experience fewer feelings of helplessness as well, since they are actively working to create helpful solutions.

## Talk Therapy

Talk therapy is a great way to safely share your feelings with someone you can trust. After a traumatic event takes place, many people experience fear, depression, grief, and sadness. A professional therapist can help



you sort through all of the feelings you are experiencing and help you develop healthy coping skills to deal with past trauma.

### Connecting With Others

After experiencing trauma, many people find that they feel isolated. It's important to stay connected to others and not completely close yourself off to people. Sometimes it can help to talk to people who have been through something similar. It can also be helpful to talk to friends and family you trust and just spend time with people who make you feel happy and comfortable.



### Self-Love

Taking the time to heal from trauma is an incredibly important act of self-love. Self-love is taking the time and effort to practice self-compassion and continually affirm and accept oneself throughout your life. Self-love can feel difficult to practice at first, especially if you have experienced events in life that have made you feel unloved by others. But if you continue to practice, over time, self-love becomes easier and easier.

When it comes to self-love, you can start small. Maybe commit to saying one nice thing about yourself every day. Maybe plan to spend one hour a week on a new hobby. Or perhaps challenge yourself not to compare yourself to others for a week. As you practice in small ways every day, treating yourself with more kindness and compassion will become more of a habit and less of something you are constantly struggling to do. At different points in your life, you may find self-love to be a challenge again. You can always go back to the beginning and repeat the process. Start small but commit to the challenge. Over time, you will find once again that you are very worthy of your love.

Below are some ways to practice self-love. Feel free to add to this list and pull it out when you need a reminder of how to practice.

- Put yourself first
- Be kind to yourself
- Forgive yourself when you make mistakes
- Invest time and energy into good friendships
- Say nice things about yourself
- Accept your body as it is
- Don't compare yourself to others
- Take time to do things you are good at and enjoy
- Take time to do things you enjoy even if you aren't good at them
- Don't be afraid to try new things



- Trust yourself to make good decisions
- Let go of toxic people
- Say no when you want to
- Ask for help when you need it

## Empowerment

Empowerment is having the confidence, knowledge, means, or ability to do things or make decisions for oneself. After going through trauma, sometimes people can lose their sense of empowerment but after trauma healing and ongoing self-care, you can regain a sense of empowerment again. Feeling empowered doesn't always happen overnight but the more knowledge we have, the more we love ourselves, and the more we trust our own decisions, the more empowered we will feel.

### Use positive self-talk.

Talking about yourself positively can help you on your way to feeling empowered. Spend more time focusing on what you can do instead of what you can't yet do. Focus on your positive qualities instead of just your negative ones. Talk about yourself the way you would talk about your best friend who just accomplished something amazing.

### Set realistic goals.

Whether it's getting better grades, making a team at school, or learning a challenging TikTok dance, set a goal for yourself, work towards it, and smash it. You have what it takes to set realistic goals for yourself and achieve them. Don't be afraid to challenge yourself and try new things.

### Surround yourself with positive people.

Positive people who believe in themselves and their friends are great people to have around. Sometimes, when we are struggling to truly feel empowered, a good friend can remind us that we are smart, confident, and completely capable of anything we set our minds to.

Feeling empowered is a great way to take control of your emotions and reclaim your time and your power. Empowerment may also lead you to help others who have gone through what you have gone through. Sometimes, talking about a negative experience and how you survived it can feel incredibly empowering. Being empowered doesn't mean you always have the answer or you never get upset. It means you are confident that you can get through what you are going through and move beyond what has happened to you in the past. Being empowered means you recognize how smart, amazing, and unique you are and you are the best person to make decisions about what to do with the direction of your life.

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