



## GCAPP PARENT TOOLKIT:

# 5 Facts Every Parent MUST Know About Teen Dating Violence

## What You Can Do as a Parent

If you **suspect your teen** may be in an **abusive relationship**, your support can be life changing, and possibly life-saving. Here's how to help:

### Talk openly and early.

- Start conversations about what healthy vs. unhealthy relationships look like. Use examples from media, news, or their own experiences. (See our *Healthy Relationships Parent Toolkit* for support.)

### Listen with empathy.

- Let them know you're a safe space. Be calm, supportive, and nonjudgmental even if you're feeling scared or angry.

### Offer protection, not pressure.

- Tell them you are there to protect and support, not to punish or take over. Help them make a safety plan and explore options.

### Connect them to help.

- Encourage them to reach out to professionals trained to help with dating violence.

## REMEMBER

Even if your teen says everything is "fine," it's okay to check in. Let them know they deserve respect, safety, and love in every relationship no matter who they are or who they love.

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Teen dating violence is more common, and more dangerous than many parents realize. It can include **physical, emotional, sexual, or digital abuse**, and it often happens in silence.

Teen dating violence can affect **teens of all genders, sexual orientations, and backgrounds**. Abuse can happen in **any relationship** regardless of whether it's straight, gay, bisexual, or otherwise. No one is immune, and **every teen deserves to feel safe and respected** in their relationships.

### Teen dating violence is alarmingly common.

Each year, nearly 1.5 million high school students in the U.S. experience physical abuse from a dating partner.

### Most teens never tell anyone.

About 65% of teens in abusive relationships never confide in anyone not even close friends or parents.

### Abuse isn't always physical.

Roughly 1 in 3 high school relationships involves some form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse.

### Abuse often continues.

Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused by a dating partner continue to date their abuser.

### Dating starts early.

An estimated 72% of 8th and 9th graders say they are already in a dating relationship.

## Warning Signs of Teen Dating Violence

Because most teens don't talk about abuse, it's crucial for parents to recognize potential red flags. While these signs could point to other issues, they are **common indicators** of an unhealthy or abusive relationship **for any teen**, regardless of their gender or who they're dating:

- Sudden changes in appearance, eating, or sleep habits
- Drop in grades or loss of interest in school or activities
- Noticeable changes in mood or personality (e.g., anxious, withdrawn, angry)
- Avoiding friends, family, or favorite hobbies
- Becoming secretive or apologetic about their dating partner
- Unexplained bruises, scratches, or injuries
- Feeling they must respond immediately to texts or calls from their partner
- Dating partner shows up unannounced or tracks location via phone/apps
- Feeling controlled, isolated, or afraid to speak up



### The National Dating Abuse Helpline:

1-866-331-9474 | Text "LOVEIS" to 22522



### Additional Resources for Teens & Parents

- [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org) — 24/7 chat, text, and phone support
- [rainn.org](https://rainn.org) — Sexual assault support and education
- [breakthecycle.org](https://breakthecycle.org) — Tools for building healthy teen relationships