

GREENSBORO POICE DEPARTMENT



Teen Dating Violence Tips for Parents

WARNING SIGNS YOUR CHILD MAY BE A VICTIM OF DATING VIOLENCE

Some of the following changes are just part of being a teenager. But, when these changes happen suddenly, or without explanation, there may be cause for concern:

- Sudden changes in clothes or make-up
- Bruises, scratches, burns, or other injuries
- Failing grades or dropping out of school activities
- Avoiding friends
- Difficulty making decisions
- Sudden changes in mood or personality, becoming secretive
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits, avoiding eye contact, having “crying jags”
- Constantly thinking about dating partner
- Wearing a beeper at partner’s request and responding immediately when paged
- Using drugs or alcohol
- Pregnancy – some teenagers believe that having a baby will help make things better; some girls are forced to have sex

WHY TEENS DON’T TELL PARENTS OR FRIENDS ABOUT THE VIOLENCE

- They are afraid their parents will make them break up
- They are embarrassed and ashamed
- They are afraid of getting hurt by their partner
- They are convinced that it is their fault or that their parents will blame them or be disappointed
- They are confused—they may think this is what dating is all about
- They are afraid of losing privileges like being able to stay out late

TEENS MAY BE UNABLE TO SEE THE ABUSE

- They have little or no experience with healthy dating relationships
- They believe being involved with someone is the most important thing in their life
- They confuse jealousy with love
- They do not realize they are being abused

<http://www.gsopd.org>

Non-emergency 336-373-2222

Community Relations 336-373-2636

- They do not think friends and others would believe this is happening
- They have lost touch with friends
- They know that the abuser acts nice—sometimes

TIPS FOR PARENTS

TIP: It is never too early to teach self-respect. No one has the right to tell your teenager who to see, what to do, or what to wear. No one has the right to hit or control anyone else.

TIP: Give your teenager a chance to talk. Listen quietly to the whole story.

TIP: If you suspect that your teenager is already involved with an abusive partner, tell your teenager that you are there to help, not to judge. If your teenager does not want to talk with you, help your teenager find another trusted person to talk with.

TIP: Focus on your child; do not put down the abusive partner. Point out how unhappy your teenager seems to be while with this person.

TIP: If your teenager tries to break up with an abusive partner, advise that the break be definite and final. Support your teenager's decision and be ready to help. Get advice from teen dating violence prevention hotlines or teen counselors how to support your child through a relationship break up.

TIP: Take whatever safety measures are necessary. Have friends available so your teenager does not have to walk alone. Consider changing class schedules or getting help from the guidance counselor, school principal, or the police if necessary.

WHAT YOU CAN SAY TO YOUR TEEN

- "I care about what happens to you. I love you and I want to help."
- "If you feel afraid, it may be abuse. Sometimes people behave in ways that are scary and make you feel threatened – even without using physical violence. Pay attention to your gut feelings."
- "The abuse is not your fault. You are not to blame, no matter how guilty the person doing this to you is trying to make you feel. Your partner should not be doing this to you."
- "It is the abuser who has a problem, not you. It is not your responsibility to help this person change."
- "It is important to talk about this. If you don't want to talk with me, find someone you trust and talk with that person. You can also talk to someone at a hotline who can help you sort things out."