



Parents

Talk with your teen about dating and healthy relationships. If you think your child is being abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend, the most important thing you can do is be supportive and remind them that help is available.

[Know the Warning Signs](#)

What to Look For

- Your child is more withdrawn than usual, or exhibits other changes to their personality.
- Your child spends less time with friends and family, and more time with their partner.
- Your child spends less time doing things he or she previously loved doing.
- Their partner excessively texts, calls or messages them on social media.
- Their partner always wants to know where they are, who they are with and what they are doing.
- Your child is frequently preoccupied with their relationship.
- You notice cuts or bruises on your child.
- You hear their partner put your child down or make them feel bad about something.
- Your child starts to excessively apologize or is more self-critical.
- Your child makes excuses for their partner's bad behavior or things they say.

Conversation Starters

- How are things going with (your partner)?
- Are any of your friends seeing anyone? How do they treat each other?
- What do you think should happen in a healthy relationship?
- I noticed you don't really see (your friend) anymore, did something happen between you two?
- Have you ever seen anyone talk down towards someone they are dating?
- Do any of your teachers ever talk about healthy relationships? Have they mentioned emotional abuse?

What to do

- Simply listen and be supportive. Your teen may need to "vent" about what happened. It's natural to want your teen to end the relationship and cut off

contact, but there are a variety of reasons a teen may not be able to do this, including fear of retaliation, pressure from friends, and love. Research shows that 78% of teens who have been abused by a partner ignored parents' advice about the situation. It is better to give support and keep lines of communication open so you are available to help.

- Tell them that the abuse is not their fault, and that nothing they could do gives another person permission to treat them in a way that is abusive.
- With your teen's permission, reach out to others like coaches, teachers, friends, etc., all of whom may be able to help.
- If you need help talking to your teen, there are apps and guides designed to help parents better understand dating abuse and what to do if you think your child is being abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend.

What NOT to do

- Wait for them to come to you.
- Judge them. Your teen may not share anything with you if they feel like you think they have done something wrong.
- Punish them. Punishing a victim of abuse only reinforces the belief that the abuse is their fault. It might also isolate your teen, making them feel like they can't talk to you or anyone else about the abuse.
- If you offer explanations, solutions or give advice, make sure you don't make it sound like it is something they *must* do and be advised that they will most likely decide what to do on their own.

Where to go from here

- Every county in New York State has a local domestic violence program that is a great resource. The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-942-6906, English and español/multi-language accessibility, or 711 for deaf or hard of hearing.
- An advocate can provide more information about how to create a [safety plan](#), how to get an order of protection, how to get counseling and how to be a better ally.

Resources

- [Love is Respect](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Abuse](#)
- [Are You Modeling Respect at Home?](#)
- [10 Tips on Talking About Healthy Relationships with Teens.](#)
- [Conversation Starters About Tech Abuse](#)

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911.

Teachers, Coaches and Other Adults

Approaching a student about their relationship can be a challenge. When there might be abuse, it is particularly delicate. For teens, having just one supportive adult in their life could mean the difference between staying with an abuser and getting help. Here are some ways that you can be a supportive ally inside and outside of the classroom.

What to Look For

- Change in personality: an engaged student stops participating in activities; an outgoing student becomes withdrawn.
- Change in behavior: no longer spending time with the same people; unable to concentrate; stops turning in work or performance declines; constantly checking their phone; only spending time with their partner.
- Change in appearance: wearing clothes that are inappropriate for the season which can be used to cover up bruises; dramatic weight loss or weight gain; bruising.
- Onset of frequent lateness or absences.

Conversation Starters

- I noticed (your performance has changed, you don't spend time with this friend anymore, you seem like you're having trouble concentrating, etc.), can we talk about this?
- I've seen a lot of students with relationships in my classroom, but I noticed that sometimes your partner says some hurtful things to you, how do you feel about that?
- I noticed that bruise on your face, I'm a safe person to talk to if there is something going on and if you don't want to tell me today, you can come to me at any time.

What to do

- Believe them.
- Simply listen and be supportive without judgement. Making someone feel bad about their relationship not only reinforces what the abuser tells them, but may shut them down from ever disclosing again or getting help.
- Tell them that the abuse is not their fault.
- Refer them to the appropriate resources.

What NOT to do

- Wait for them to come to you.
- Pretend you don't notice anything.
- Approach their abuser or get other friends of the student involved.

- If you offer explanations, solutions or give advice, make sure you don't make it sound like it is something they *must* do and be advised that they will most likely decide what to do on their own.

Where to go from here

- Do not report abuse or threaten to report abuse unless you are mandated to do so. Often, attempts to protect a teen from their abuser can have dramatic consequences for them which can result in more severe abuse because they got their abuser in trouble. Whether or not a teen decides to end their relationship, maintaining your status as an adult who is safe to talk to is the most important thing.
- Know what resources are available through your school including referrals to guidance counselors, social workers, and peer support groups.
- Every county in New York State has a local domestic violence program that is a great resource. The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-800-942-6906, English and español/multi-language accessibility, or 711 for deaf or hard of hearing.
- An advocate can provide more information about how to create a [safety plan](#), how to get an order of protection, how to get counseling and how to be a better ally.

Resources

- [Information for Schools](#)
- [Coaching Boys into Men](#)
- [JWI: All Adults Can Make a Difference](#)
- [Love is Respect](#)
- [Take a Stand for Healthy Relationships](#)

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911.



**Office for the
Prevention of
Domestic Violence**

1-800-942-6906

NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline
CONFIDENTIAL --- 24 HRS/7 DAYS
English & español, multi-language accessibility
711: Deaf or Hard of Hearing
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
TDD: 1-800-810-7444