



Illinois  
New Mexico  
Oklahoma  
Texas

# QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER



These are the most common questions our Youth Advisory Board get asked everyday...

**Dating abuse really isn't a big deal right? They are just fighting things out in their own way and sometimes arguments just get out of control, right?**

Teen dating violence is a pattern of abusive and violent behavior in teen dating relationships. It comes from the perpetrator trying to control and gain power in the relationship. It is not just a loss of self-control.

**Teen dating violence doesn't really happen very often, right?**

One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner. That is 10 people in an average high school classroom in the U.S.

**If there is no physical violence then is it really abuse?**

Dating abuse doesn't always look like a hit or a slap. Sometimes abusers will be violent and abusive in other ways. There are many forms of abuse including emotional, verbal and sexual abuse.

**If your partner always wants to hang out with you, how can you tell whether he or she just really likes you or is being possessive?**

When you are beginning a new relationship with someone you really like, it's natural to want to spend a lot of your time with that person. And it can feel really nice to know that someone wants to spend a lot of their time with you. But it's important to be aware of whether some aspect of your relationship is leading you to let go of friendships and activities that mean a lot to you. No matter how committed you and your partner are to each other, it is still vital that you each have your own lives and interests and that you're supportive of each other's independence.

**To learn more:**

[www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking](http://www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking)

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



## THESE ARE SOME COMMON BUT CHALLENGING QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER

**Is it okay for a partner to urge you to spend time alone together? Why or why not?**

Quality time can be a very important part of any relationship. However, if your partner makes you feel guilty about spending time with anyone else or if the amount of time you spend with your partner is hurting your relationships with friends or family members, it could be a warning sign of an unhealthy relationship.

**Your partner is very concerned about what you wear to school. He says he doesn't want other guys to get the wrong impression. Is this a warning sign of abuse? Why or why not?**

If a boyfriend or girlfriend is trying to control what you wear or change what you look like, it could definitely be a warning sign of abuse. Remember, it is not your partner's job to set rules for you. If something you do or wear makes them feel jealous or insecure, that's their problem – not yours.

**If abuse happens once in a relationship, do you think it will happen again? Why or why not?**

While every relationship is different, abuse often follows a pattern that repeats itself (and escalates) over time. So if abuse happens once, it is likely it will reoccur. However, even if abuse only happens one time in a relationship, it is one time too many.

**Is it normal to sometimes get upset with your boyfriend or girlfriend?**

Of course! No one is perfect – sometimes our partners will do something that hurts our feelings or makes us mad. The important thing is how you deal with those feelings when they come up. Can the issue be resolved without either person in the relationship feeling threatened, disrespected, or compromised? If so, the arguments that come up in your relationship are likely a healthy part of your relationship's growth. If not, it may be important to examine your relationship to make sure it's as healthy as both you and your partner deserve.

**If you come from an abusive family, will you be abusive?**

While research indicates that people who witness abuse as a child are more likely to be in abusive relationships, growing up in an abusive household does not mean you are doomed to be abusive. Unhealthy relationship behavior is learned and un-learning that behavior takes more than a couple of months and some community service. Learning how to build and maintain healthy relationships can take a lifetime.

**If someone stays in an abusive relationship doesn't that mean they're dumb or weak?**

Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused continue to date their abuser. Typically, dating violence does not start on the first date. Victims might believe the abuser can change or stop the abuse. Often the victim is isolated from close friends and family, or has limited access to money or transportation which makes getting out an obstacle. When you accuse/judge or put down the victim of having full or partial responsibility for the abuse that they are going through it's called victim blaming. No matter what the victim does, the abuser makes a choice to respond with violence. It is never the victim's fault for being abused.

**To learn more:**

[www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking](http://www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking)

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



*If you don't see your question answered here, you can always visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) or chat with an advocate online.*

### Men can't be victims of dating violence and women cannot be perpetrators, right?

Dating violence takes place in all relationships and both men and women can be victims and perpetrators of dating violence. Although there is more research showing men initiating the violence more often, using greater force and being more repeatedly abusive than women, this doesn't mean that women can't do the same. It's often difficult for men to speak out about abuse. This is caused by social stigmas and norms -- they fear ridicule and judgment from peers.

### Is it possible for both people in a relationship to be abusive?

We know that relationships are not black and white. In certain incidents of abuse it's possible for different people to be the aggressor. Retaliating to incidents of abuse makes things a lot more complicated. Abusive relationships are built on the dynamics of power and control, where one partner is trying to control or hurt the other. If both people are showing signs of abuse then that relationship is not healthy. Even when two people exhibit abusive behaviors, in the long run there tends to be one primary aggressor.

### What if you recognize that you are the abusive partner?

If you're being abusive toward your partner, the first and hardest part of changing is admitting your behavior is wrong. It's very important to take responsibility for the problem and get help to end it. If you've already taken this step, you're on the right track. Remember, violence is always a choice. There are no excuses and no one else to blame for being abusive. Focus on how your abuse affects your partner, family and children. Fully accept how seriously you have hurt the people you care about and remember you are not alone, there is help available at [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).

### Can you get a restraining order if you go to the same school?

In many states, minors can get domestic violence restraining orders sometimes without parental consent. At the court hearing, the judge will make decisions about the distance and restrictions for the case. A judge can make a special order for people who go to the same school or work together. These special orders will temporarily reduce the required distance set in the order. Every situation is different and the judge can make specific requests to fit most situations.

### Is something small like pinching your partner really abusive?

Yes - even subtle forms of abuse should be taken seriously. Abuse is defined by unwanted behavior with the intention to harm or threaten the other person. Often an abusive partner will pinch or do something subtle in public to hurt their partner in a way that people may not notice.

### How can you deal with jealousy in a relationship?

Jealousy is a natural emotion, but it is an emotion that can do a lot of damage if not dealt with in a healthy, respectful way. If you're feeling jealous, think a little bit about where that jealousy is coming from -- are you dealing with some sort of insecurity about yourself or your relationship? Are there some trust issues between you and your partner that you need to address? Just because jealousy isn't a sign of love, doesn't mean it should be ignored in a relationship. Talk to your partner about what you're feeling. Just remember that the jealousy you're feeling is your responsibility, not theirs and that you never have the right to use your jealousy as an excuse to control or hurt someone.

### What if my friend denies or does not want to leave the abusive relationship, even though you try to tell them that it is unhealthy?

Sometimes, as a friend, it is frustrating to watch someone stay in an abusive relationship. The best thing you can do for your friend is to be supportive and listen patiently. Acknowledge their feelings and be respectful of their decisions. It is important that your friend sees you as someone they can go to when they are ready to get help. Remember, forcing the victim to leave may be dangerous if they are not ready or do not have a safety plan.

#### To learn more:

[www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking](http://www.loveisrespect.org/start-talking)

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