

Cell Phones and Abuse

Cell phones are a great way to keep in touch with friends and family. However, they also can play a role in teen dating abuse. Because phone calls, texting and messaging allow you to be in constant communication, cell phones can be a powerful tool for abusers to monitor and control their girlfriends or boyfriends day and night.

What Do I Need to Know?

If you are feeling threatened or suffocated by your partner's constant need to keep track of you, it may be a sign that you are in an unhealthy and potentially dangerous relationship. If the person you are with says or does anything that makes you afraid, lowers your self-esteem, or manipulates or controls you, it is verbal or emotional abuse. Whether in person, online, or by phone, abuse is the same. You have the right to be in a safe and healthy relationship, free from all types of abuse.

What Can I Do?

Whether you feel like someone is already abusing or controlling you with a cell phone, or you want to prevent it from ever happening, here are some specific tips that can help you safely use your cell phone:

- Remember, it is always okay to turn off your phone. (Just be sure your parent or guardian knows how to contact you in an emergency.)
- Do not answer calls from unknown numbers. Your abuser can easily call you from another line if he/she suspects you are avoiding him/her.
- Do not respond to hostile, harassing, abusive or inappropriate texts or messages. Responding can encourage the person who sent the message. You won't get the person to stop – and your messages might get you in trouble and make it harder to get a restraining order or file a criminal report.
- Many phone companies can block up to ten numbers from texting or calling you. Contact your phone company or check their website to see if you can do this on your phone.
- Remember that pictures on cell phones can be easily shared and distributed. Be careful what images you allow to be taken of you.
- If you are in or coming out of a dangerous relationship, you should not be using any form of technology to contact your abuser. It can be dangerous and may be used against you in the future.
- It may seem extreme, but if the abuse and harassment will not stop, changing your phone number may be your best option.

If you are being abused or harassed, whether it is over the phone, online or in person, Break the Cycle can help you learn about your options and legal rights.

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship..

free from violence and free from fear.