Break the Cycle

Empowering Youth to End Domestic Violence

Break the Cycle Fact Sheet

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KEY STAFF: Marjorie Gilberg, Cristina Escobar

MISSION: Break the Cycle engages, educates and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.

THE ISSUE: One in three teens will experience abuse in a dating relationship and two-thirds of them will never report it to anyone. Dating violence is not just dangerous, it is devastating to a young person's health and safety. Teens who experience abuse are more likely to abuse drugs, drop-out of school, engage in high-risk sexual behavior, act violently and even attempt suicide. Without the proper support and intervention, young victims find it extremely difficulty to change abusive patterns as they become adults.

PROGRAMS: Break the Cycle offers programs that defy geographic bounds—ensuring that no young person is excluded from receiving the help, tools and information they need to live free from violence.

Our education program teaches young people about the warning signs of abuse, healthy relationships and their legal rights and responsibilities.

By encouraging youth activism, we spread life-saving information through peer groups and build leaders in the movement against dating violence.

We advocate for more effective laws and policies to equip young people with the support they need to prevent, diagnose and escape unhealthy relationships.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Break the Cycle responds to violence with culturally appropriate services to diverse youth populations between the ages of 12-24. To date, our resources have reached more than one million youth nationwide.

SUSTAINABILITY: Break the Cycle is committed to building a reliable and diverse financial base. We solicit funding year-round from many sources including government agencies, foundations, corporations, community groups and individual donors. Our efforts ensure that Break the Cycle is able to fund each of our violence-ending programs and maintain long-term stability.

For further information, feel free to visit our website or email media@breakthecycle.org.

THE HUFFINGTON POST
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CAUSECAST
MARCH 17, 2010

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FROM AMERICAN EXPRESS AND TAKEPART

Marjorie Gilberg
Executive Director, Break the Cycle
Posted: February 24, 2010 03:06 PM

What Good is a Month?

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This February is Black History Month. It is also American Heart, Children's Dental Health, Marfan Awareness, Library Lovers' and as of this year, Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. As a leader of Break the Cycle, a national abuse prevention organization, I don't want to discount the effort it takes to get the federal government to declare a national awareness month. Yet I can't help but wonder, now that we got one of our own, what good is it going to do us?

Last year at this time, the media was cluttered with the horrifying and very public act of violence perpetrated by Chris Brown against Rihanna. Overnight, every major media outlet jumped on the awareness-raising bandwagon. Even Oprah and Tyra got together to host a special show about teen dating violence. The groundwork was laid for a national dialogue on the issue.

However, just one month after the infamous incident, the Boston Herald published an article identifying a disturbing trend those of us in the field were already witnessing--teens were pointing fingers at Rihanna assuming she must have done something to "deserve" the attack. Which begs the question, where did we go wrong?

Somehow, among all of the hoopla and hullabaloo, we failed to get the message across. Or perhaps worse, we got the wrong message across.

Most of the coverage about Chris Brown and Rihanna focused on the shocking nature of the violence and that it involved celebrities. There was even a gruesome PSA created in which two teenagers reenacted the crime to an ominous narration of the actual police report. It seemed as though response to the issue was funneled exclusively through tabloid sensationalism.

Sometimes abuse isn't that dramatic or apparent. It's easy to recognize that severe acts of violence are abusive. But helping teens realize the subtle ways abusers use power and control to manipulate their victims requires a lot more than any single PSA, magazine article or television episode can deliver.

Focusing so much attention on this one example of extreme violence has no meaning without the context of how abusive relationships develop. The story overshadowed the details -- what are the patterns, warning signs and reasons people stay in unhealthy relationships? If you're already in danger, what can you do to protect yourself? As a society, what can we do to reduce the number of young people who experience abusive relationships?

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Frankly, the statistics about teen dating violence are shocking enough -- without the sensationalism:

- Every year, 1.5 million high school students are physically abused by their dating partner and two-thirds of those who experience abuse never tell anyone.
- One-quarter of high school girls are sexually or physically abused by a dating partner.
- Of female homicide victims over age 15, one-third are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands or boyfriends.
- Half of young victims who report both dating violence and rape attempt suicide.

And nowadays an abuser can insult, attack, stalk, harass, text, call, email, spy, invade and threaten a target without even leaving the comfort of his or her own home. Nationally, there are some key players making significant strides on this issue. Corporations like Mary Kay and Liz Claiborne have stepped up to work alongside organizations like Break the Cycle to push forward critical legislation, mandating that schools provide domestic violence prevention education. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Blue Shield of California Foundation have joined forces with the Family Violence Prevention Fund to launch community-wide pilot programs in 11 cities around the country. Web sites like loveisrespect.org and Break the Cycle's thesafespace.org now offer crisis intervention and vital information for teens.

In spite of this progress, the majority of services for domestic violence victims are designed to help adults. If we're going to tackle this issue, teens need specialized services that address their unique situation. In many instances teens face unequal protection under the law, limited access to transportation, shelter or legal assistance, and schools that lack adequate policies to deal with dating abuse on campus. What's more, adults who are in a position to help often dismiss teen relationships for "puppy love" and overlook the seriousness and real danger of teen dating violence.

If we're sincere about helping young people foster healthy relationships, we need comprehensive educational programs in schools nationwide. But the lessons can't be limited to the teens. We must also educate parents, teachers, doctors and law enforcement on how to make young people safer.

We need schools to establish dating violence policies that ensure confidentiality and safety so teens can speak up when they are being abused. We must call on our lawmakers and political leaders to ensure that minors have equal access to safety and justice in every state. We need to examine the messages we send youth through television, film and radio. And we should be brave enough to ask ourselves, "Am I modeling healthy relationships for the young people in my life?"

The truth is, a month isn't enough. It's going to take a commitment from all of us, every day of every year, until the violence stops.

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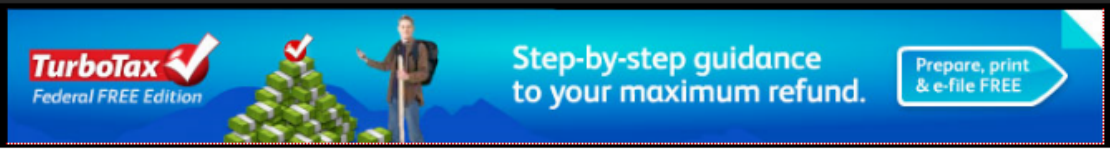

Dec 3 2009 9:17 AM EST

MTV Launches 'A Thin Line' To Stop Digital Abuse

Shows, contests and online tools are aimed at halting the spread of sexting and cyberbullying.

By MTV News Staff

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Photo: Athinline.org

MTV announced on Thursday (December 3) the launch of a multi-year initiative called **"A Thin Line"** aimed at stopping the spread of abuse in the form of sexting, cyberbullying and digital dating abuse. The goal of the initiative is to empower America's youth to identify, respond to and stop the spread of the various forms of digital harassment.

"Our audience lives online, and while every generation deals with their own set of abuse issues, the digital sphere exponentially increases opportunities for misuse," said Stephen Friedman, general manager of MTV. "There is a very thin line between private and public, this moment and forever, love and abuse, and words and wounds. A Thin Line is built to empower our audience to draw their own line between digital use and digital abuse."

According to a **new study** released on Thursday by MTV and *The Associated Press* that explores the full scope of digital abuse, 50 percent of 14-to-24-year-olds have been the target of some form of digital abuse, 30 percent have sent or received nude photos of other young people on their cell phones or online and 12 percent of those who have sexted have contemplated suicide, a rate four times higher than those who haven't. The study explores the pervasiveness of digital abuse, how it's affecting America's youth, how they're responding to it, their concerns and much more.

A Thin Line will address digital abuse issues on a number of fronts, including on-air, online and with real-world initiatives integrated into MTV's top-rated programming. Among the programming efforts will be an MTV News special focused on sexting that will air on Valentine's Day 2010 called "True Life: I Have Digital Drama," public service announcements (including two by acclaimed director Joel Schumacher, "Public Nudity" and "Tattoo"), innovative online and mobile tools, and the Redraw the Line Challenge, which will ask young people to submit their ideas for creative solutions to halt the spread of digital abuse.

On Thursday, MTV also launched **AThinLine.org**, a place where young people can get access to information, resources and support on issues related to digital abuse.

For the initiative, MTV has partnered with Facebook, MySpace, the Family Violence Prevention Fund, WiredSafety, the Anti-Defamation League, Blue Shield of California Foundation, LovelsRespect.org, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, Liz Claiborne Inc., DoSomething.org, Break the Cycle, Ruder Finn, Teenangels, and PBS' "Frontline." Thursday's launch of A Thin Line coincided with Liz Claiborne Inc.'s It's Time to Talk Day, an annual day dedicated to encouraging Americans to speak up and raise national attention for domestic violence, including teen dating violence and intimate partner abuse.

"The safety of our users is paramount to us, and only by working together can we seek to educate young people about the dangers of digital abuse and cyberbullying," said Tim Sparapani, director of public policy at Facebook. "We applaud and support MTV for all of the work it has done to launch A Thin Line and are pleased to be a part of this important initiative which both empowers and educates."

Working with the Blue Shield of California Foundation, MTV launched the **Redraw the Line Challenge**, a contest that asks young people to come up with a digital antidote to digital abuse — from new mobile or Web-based services to social games or viral content. The winning individual or team will receive a $10,000 prize and a chance to work with MTV to see their idea come to life. Entries are due by February 19, 2010.

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- 'God of War 3' Ending Could Have Been Much Darker
- Kristen Stewart Says She Could Never Be A Rock Star
- Lady Gaga Says Beyonce Is Her 'Vehicle' For Change In 'Telephone'
- Jessica Simpson Praises Women She Met In Morocco
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Emily Silverstein saw no signs that her ex-boyfriend might hurt her.

The Hidden Danger of Breakups

Courtesy of Bob Silverstein

Emily with friend Cecelia Ticktin (top, right), and roommate Sally Quinn (bottom, far left)

"WHAT KEVIN DID TO HER WAS TERRIBLE," SAYS A FRIEND. "I'M TRYING TO FORGIVE HIM. EMILY WOULD."

Columbine, Virginia Tech, the Oklahoma City bombing. Kevin kept agreeing, saying, 'It's just so messed up.' He was genuinely concerned. Typical Kevin." Around 1 a.m., the crowd broke up. Kevin hugged everyone good-bye. Friends say that he wasn't drunk and he seemed happy.

Earlier that evening, Emily had led a discussion on gay rights at Peace House, then went to the library and finally back to her room, where she texted Noor to say *good night*, ending her message with "I'll call you tomorrow." Those are her last known words.

At some point after that, for reasons that are still unclear, Emily went to Kevin's house. What happened next is detailed in the stark language of the police report. Around 6 a.m., Kevin phoned a friend of both his and Emily's, asking her to come over. She arrived to find Emily's bloodied body in the bathtub and called 911. Minutes after officers showed up, Kevin came outside and confessed; later, at police headquarters, he added more details.

He described getting into a physical argument with Emily. She was on the floor as he choked her and then grabbed a steak knife off his desk and stabbed her in the neck. For 15 minutes afterward, he just sat next to her. Then, "concerned about the blood," he removed Emily's pants and wrapped them around her neck before carrying her body and placing it on a shower curtain in the tub. Kevin volunteered to police that he had marijuana in his apartment and he'd quit taking the prescribed antidepressant Zoloft.

The trial is set for this month; he has pleaded not guilty to criminal homicide and other charges. If convicted, he will die in prison; Pennsylvania grants no parole for first-degree homicide. So like many men who kill a partner and then commit suicide, Kevin will have in effect destroyed his own life after taking Emily's.

At the pretrial proceedings, young friends wrestled with mourning Emily and, at the same time, the loss of Kevin. "Emily was a forgiving person," Antonia says. "What he did to her was very terrible. I'm trying my hardest as a good friend to Emily to forgive him. Emily would."

Remembering Emily

Her family has created The EMILY Fund: Education, Mentorship, Inspiration, Leadership, and Youth for a Better World. It awards scholarships to young activists who apply by writing an essay about what they have done to help create a more peaceful and sustainable world.

"Emily's life shouldn't be defined by how it ended," insists Sally Quinn, Emily's sophomore roommate. "If she were here now, she'd deserve as much attention for who she is and what she stands for as she's getting for dying. The world lost out on someone who would have made a difference." ■

HOW TO SAY GOOD-BYE SAFELY

If you or the people close to you have any gut feelings that your soon-to-be ex is capable of abuse, take these precautions.

- **Before you end it, tell a friend, and if your ex has a key to your place, stay with someone you trust.**
- **Alert friends, family, and coworkers not to speak with him.**
- **Break up by phone or e-mail. It may seem unkind, but put your well-being first. There's no magic script to prevent violence—you could share the things you like about him, but give your reasons for leaving only once and keep things short.**
- **Change your routine. Stop going to places you frequented together. Make your profile on social-networking sites private, and change passwords.**
- **If he refuses to accept the breakup, seek professional help from a counselor, police, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 800-799-SAFE. If he makes actual threats, call 911 immediately.**

NOTE: Plan ahead—safety-planning work sheets along with info on warning signs and restraining orders are available at thesafespace.org.

SOURCES: CRISTINA ESCOBAR, SENIOR COORDINATOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR BREAK THE CYCLE, A DATING-VIOLENCE ADVOCACY GROUP; JENNIFER STORM, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF A VICTIM/WITNESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

(From top) courtesy of Cecelia Ticktin; courtesy of Sally Quinn.

Biden Commemorates Violence Against Women Act

Biden, women's groups observe 15th anniversary of Violence Against Women Act

By CHRISTINE SIMMONS Associated Press Writer
WASHINGTON September 29, 2009 (AP)

The Associated Press
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Women's groups gathered at Vice President Joe Biden's home Tuesday night to toast the 15th anniversary of landmark legislation aimed at eliminating violence against women.

"You've helped so many women step out of the darkness. You've helped so many young girls expect a different future, expect different treatment," Biden said as he commemorated the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. "This is a day to celebrate. We have so much to be proud of."

The National Women's Law Center, FaithTrust Institute, National Network to End Domestic Violence and American Association of University Women were among the groups invited to the vice president's residence, located on the grounds of the U.S. Naval Observatory in northwest Washington.

Biden recalled how domestic violence was once regarded as a private matter. "It wasn't the business of the government. It's a family matter," he told about 100 guests. Advocates for women inspired a different attitude, he said.

The Violence Against Women Act, crafted by Biden while he served on the Senate Judiciary Committee as a senator from Delaware, led to more money for women's shelters and law-enforcement training.

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Domestic violence rates fell sharply between 1993 and 2004. The Bureau of Justice Statistics said that "intimate partner violence" rates fell by more than 50 percent, which some experts attributed to key elements of the 1994 law.

Biden joined advocates from women's groups in saying that more needed to be done. "We cannot let this slip from the consciousness," he said.

Advocates are focusing on the International Violence Against Women Act, a separate piece of legislation, and reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in 2011, said Juley Fulcher of the organization Break the Cycle.

Fulcher, a guest at the event, said there's more work to do to prevent dating violence and to provide services for teenagers who have experienced domestic and sexual violence. "There's definitely room for improvement," she said.

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Advocates worry that high unemployment may be contributing to domestic violence across the nation. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has received about 21,000 calls on average a month this year. Last year, the average was 19,500, said Retha Fielding, a spokeswoman for the hot line.

Fielding said she believes the number of calls has risen because of the recession as well as increased awareness of the hot line number. When someone in a household loses a job or a family loses a house, a woman could feel as if she has fewer choices if she wants to walk away from the violence, Fielding said.

"They're afraid to leave or they can't make plans to leave because the situation has changed," she said. "Most of these women have children they have to take care of."

When asked how the government is responding to domestic abuse tied to the recession, Lynn Rosenthal, White House domestic adviser on violence against women, said federal agencies are looking carefully at the problem.

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"We're very aware of it," Rosenthal said.

On the Net:

National Domestic Violence Hotline: http://www.ndvh.org/

National Women's Law Center: http://www.nwlc.org/

FaithTrust Institute: http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/

American Association of University Women: http://www.aauw.org/

National Network to End Domestic Violence: http://www.nnedv.org/

Break the Cycle: http://www.breakthecycle.org/

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AP Associated Press

Report: States lag with dating-violence laws

By DAVID CRARY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Only a handful of states have responded to teen dating violence with laws enabling the youthful victims to obtain protection orders on equal terms with adults, an advocacy group says in a new national survey.

The report on state laws by Break the Cycle, a teen-violence prevention organization that has worked with the Justice Department, gave A grades to only five states. Twelve states got D's and 11 failed.

Grades were based on various comparisons between the legal treatment of adult victims of domestic violence and teen victims of dating violence. Failure was automatic for states where protective orders are unavailable for minors, or where dating relationships are not explicitly recognized as valid for obtaining such orders.

"It is essential that dating violence and the needs of minor victims be specifically addressed within state domestic violence statutes," said Marjorie Gilberg, executive director of Break the Cycle. "Lawmakers have a responsibility ... to propose legislation that will ensure the protection of all victims of domestic violence — regardless of their age."

National surveys have estimated that one in three youths experiences dating abuse at some point during their teens — incidents ranging from a slap on the cheek to homicide. Despite the high rate of abuse, Break the Cycle and other advocacy groups say too many states do not treat dating violence with appropriate seriousness.

"Some states feel that if have they good child abuse laws, minors are protected," Gilberg said in a telephone interview. "There's definitely a lack of awareness about the prevalence of abuse among teens in their relationships."

Break the Cycle contends that all young people over 12 should have the right to petition for protection on their own behalf and that domestic violence protection orders should be available even against abusers who are minors.

The new report gives states lower grades if their laws block minors from seeking protective orders on their own, without parental involvement.

Sheryl Cates, CEO of the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, said parental involvement is a challenging issue.

"If you're a parent, you want to know if your child is in danger, but on other hand, teens want the anonymity, to not have to tell their parents," she said. "It's very complicated, trying to find a balance between a victim's rights and parents' right to know."

Kristina Korobov, an attorney with National Center for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women, said it's sometimes crucial for teens to be able to seek protective orders on their own. They may have strained relations with their parents or come from a home where domestic violence already is occurring.

Korobov, a former prosecutor in Indianapolis and Loudoun County, Va., said it's important in such instances for courts to provide an attorney or other expert to guide the youth through the legal process.

The report commended New Hampshire as the only state where the law specifically allows minors of any age to go to court by themselves to request a protection order. It received an A along with California, Illinois, Minnesota and Oklahoma.

Date: Monday, March 24, 2009

Tina Turner to Rihanna: Leave Chris Brown Now!

Bonnie Fuller

Founder, Bonnie Fuller Media

Posted February 20, 2009 | 06:50 PM (EST) crime thriller, City Hall, told me, "Those pictures were taken for a purpose--for a criminal

Nevertheless, Rihanna needs to focus on what matters most in her life right now--ending an allegedly abusive love affair with boyfriend Chris Brown.

If she doesn't take this opportunity to make a clean, full and forever break from Brown, she could end up stuck in a relationship which will likely become even more abusive.

Rihanna needs to learn from another beautiful, talented award-winning singer who endured 16 years of an abusive relationship in marriage--that's Tina Turner.

Turner's lover was also a famous musician and the partner in her entertainment career. She also became involved with him when she was very young, just 18 -- Rihanna had her 21st birthday on February 20th.

Tina ended up with a battered and bloody face like Rihanna. In her case, she finally made a decision to flee her relationship in 1976, and had to show her bruised face to the manager of a Ramada Inn in Dallas, in order to get a room to stay for free. She had escaped from Ike penniless and with nowhere to go.

Rihanna needs to ask herself "Do I want to spend years of my life, like Tina, trapped in a relationship so controlling that I could lose all my self-esteem and control over my own finances?" It could happen.

After Turner ran away, she spent years living on food stamps before being able to reignite her career. "My life...couldn't have gotten much lower," she told *USA Today*.

Unfortunately, there are reports that Rihanna, like many women in abusive relationships, isn't ready to give up on her boyfriend yet.

"She keeps saying she still loves him," a friend reports to *Us Weekly*.

Another friend told *Star*, that Rihanna has already forgiven Chris for the "misunderstanding," and she's reaching out to him through texts and phone calls.

Rihanna seems to believe #1, that Chris Brown's abuse was a one-time incident, unlikely to happen again and #2, that she is somewhat responsible for his attack.

As an editor who has printed many features on women who are victims of domestic abuse, in *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Marie Claire*, I can tell you that Rihanna's reactions are heartbreakingly familiar.

Most women who are victims of domestic violence have so little self esteem that they blame themselves for provoking their beatings. They believe that their own behavior invited the abuse, telling themselves: I'm "too demanding" "too needy" or "not attractive enough."

Tina talks in her bio on her tinaturner.com site about spending years trying not to make Ike angry.

Rihanna no doubt is telling herself that she made Chris angry. She's also apparently telling friends that she's worried about Chris.

"Rihanna says she doesn't want to make Chris look like a villain in all of this" an insider told Star.

At this point, Chris Brown has issued a public apology to his battered girlfriend, and has said that he is seeking counseling from his pastor and mother, and is committed to being a better person.

That is typical behavior for an abuser. They are often remorseful...until they get upset again.

"Actually a typical abuser doesn't have an anger control issue, he truly thinks that [illegible] love looks like. He thinks he's supposed to control the woman in his life," explains Chai Shenoy, an attorney with Break the Cycle, a non-profit which educates teens to live without violence.

No matter what, Rihanna needs to listen to someone who has walked in her shoes. She should buy Tina Turner's autobiography, I Tina, ASAP and read about Turner's honest account of her life with an abusive lover.

Rihanna -- take it from Tina and walk away from Chris Brown now and for good! And don't look back!

Follow Bonnie on Twitter at twitter.com/bonniefuller

Photos: Getty

A Worthwhile Cause

Filed under Inspiration

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crazy IN LOVE

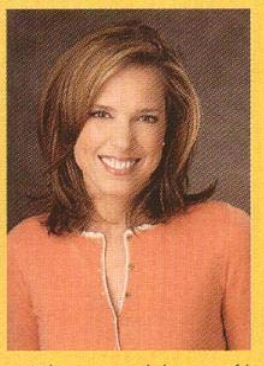
OBSESSION, JEALOUSY AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE ARE BECOMING ALL TOO COMMON IN TEEN RELATIONSHIPS. BUT YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD STEER CLEAR OF A DANGEROUS LIAISON. **BY RICHARD LALIBERTE**

They met in summer school in June 2003. Jane Fritsch* of Austin, Texas, had just turned 15 and was working ahead on some classes for her upcoming sophomore year of high school. She couldn't help but notice the outgoing 16-year-old boy who flirted with all the girls—including her. "Here was this popular guy talking to me, the shy girl," she says. He told her she was pretty, funny and smart.

Almost immediately they became inseparable—but almost as quickly, there were troubling signs. "I'm the kind of guy who likes a lot of physical attention," Jane's new boyfriend snapped at her during their first week as a couple. "If I don't get it from you, I'll get it from

*Some names and id fying deta have been changed

HANNAH STORM SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW



The oldest of my three girls is 10, so they're still a little young for dating—thank goodness. But that certainly hasn't stopped me from thinking about what to tell them when it happens. The experts I've talked to say that when your kid tells you she's in love, it's important not to trivialize her feelings by saying, "That's ridiculous," or even "How cute." That will only shut down communication. Instead, ask lots of questions (such as "What do you like about him?") without giving speeches. Share what you remember about dating so she knows that you get the ups and downs of being a teenager in love.

Kids also need to understand that little gestures can mean a lot at this age and rumors can cause hurt feelings. Talk to your teen about not starting gossip about herself by overhyping a relationship at the very start to her friends. Finally, help your inexperienced teen prepare for decisions that may arise when you are not around. For instance, you might ask, "What would you do if he wants to hold hands or kiss you?" Offer ways to respond.

WATCH *THE EARLY SHOW* ON CBS FOR OUR MONTHLY SEGMENT, "IN THE FAMILY CIRCLE."

really cared about me," says Sarai.

This is why once an abuser establishes control, victims can cling tenaciously to the relationship even when they're miserable. "A teen in a first relationship may have no knowledge of what he or she should expect from a partner," says Liza Lorenz, director of national programs at Break the Cycle, an abuse-prevention organization in Los Angeles. "Parents need to talk to young teens about what a healthy relationship is, what an abusive relationship is, and how to tell the difference."

Parents also have to recognize a problem when their child can't. "It was unthinkable to me," says Jane, "that someone so special would hurt me." ●

WHERE TO GET HELP

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE
800-799-7233, ndvh.org
24/7 support, including referrals to free local counseling for teens and young adults

LOVE IS NOT ABUSE
loveisnotabuse.com
Interactive information about dating abuse for teens and parents; program funded by Liz Claiborne Inc.

CHOOSE RESPECT
chooserespect.org
Quizzes, downloads and information for teens from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

BREAK THE CYCLE
888-988-8336
breakthecycle.org
Legal advice, support, online communities and education for abused teens

NATIONAL TEEN DATING ABUSE HELPLINE
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BREAKING CYCLE OF ABUSE MUST START WITH OUR YOUTH

DEAR ABBY: Your recent letters regarding domestic violence bring important attention to the dangers of this problem. Unfortunately, every year thousands of Americans lose loved ones to this terrible epidemic, and most are left wondering what they could have done to prevent it.

Too often we assume that violence happens only to other people -- people of a different race or culture, people who live in a different community, or people in a different type of relationship. But domestic violence does not discriminate. It can touch everyone -- through friends, co-workers and family members who are suffering silently without our even knowing it. Many of us also know abusers -- people who may seem charming and likable on the surface but cause fear, self-doubt, pain, even death, to those they claim to love.

Recent studies show that as many as one-third of teens experience abuse in a dating relationship. And, more than half of teens say they know friends who have been physically, sexually or verbally abused. The need for early intervention to change these shocking statistics is clear.

We must reach out to youth and talk openly and often about these issues so we can help them to avoid the terrible sorrow felt by families and others who are victims of abuse. Each of us has the right to a safe and healthy relationship free from violence, coercion and fear.

-- JESSICA ARONOFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BREAK THE CYCLE

DEAR JESSICA: Thank you for an important letter. I hope it grabs the attention it deserves from teens and their parents. Your statement that as many as one-third of teenagers experience abuse in a dating relationship, and more than half of them have friends who have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused, will shock many people, I am sure.

Readers, Break the Cycle provides domestic violence education, information and help to students ages 12 to 24 throughout the country. It teaches what healthy relationships are and helps them to recognize the warning signs of abuse. Break the Cycle lets them know that help is available if they are suffering or in danger, and shows them that they deserve safe, supportive, non-violent relationships.

There are opportunities for interested people to help in this endeavor. To find out more about this worthwhile program, log onto www.breakthecycle.org, or call toll-free at 1-888-988-8336 (TEEN). I have supported Break the Cycle in the past, and continue to do so, because the earlier young people learn to differentiate between healthy relationships and obsessive, destructive ones, the healthier our society will be.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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February 27, 2006

I grew up in an abusive home

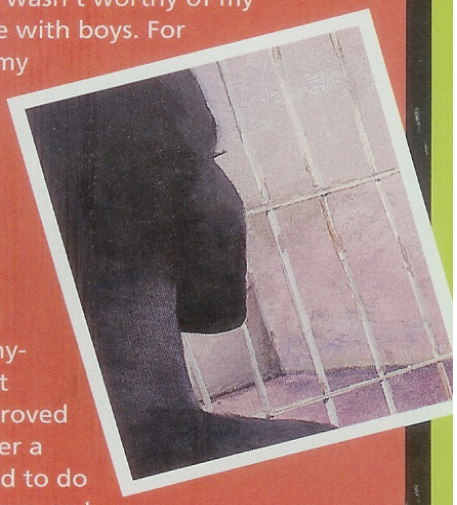
My father has always been extremely controlling—it's his way or no way! If you tried to shut him out, he'd use his power of manipulation to get what he wanted. My dad made me and my brothers and sister feel like we were nothing. If we tried to voice our feelings, he'd always make comments like, "You don't deserve to be heard."

There was physical abuse, too. One time, he knocked my sister to the ground, and my oldest brother had numerous fights with my dad over tiny problems. That went on for years until my bro just couldn't take it anymore. He had a mental breakdown and had to be admitted to the hospital because of the extensive abuse.

My other brother ran away when he was 17 and lived on the streets for at least a year. And there have been times when my father pushed me aside or physically restrained me, but honestly, the verbal and emotional abuse were more hurtful. He always told or showed me that I wasn't worth anything. I felt like I didn't have any control because my dad was the dominating force. Of course, my mother felt the same way as we kids did, but she was dependent on him for money and concerned with keeping the family together. She didn't have much of a voice, which was so depressing to see.

What I didn't realize was that I had developed some of my father's traits. I didn't get into physical fights, but I'd do mean things and I didn't understand

Also, because I felt like I wasn't worthy of my dad's love, I've had trouble with boys. For example, I wouldn't trust my boyfriend's feelings for me or let myself have serious feelings for him. Subconsciously I'd always try to mess up something good so there would be drama in my life.



I went through a period when I wouldn't talk to anyone and I barely ate. I kept everything inside, which proved to be very destructive. After a while, though, I knew I had to do something about my feelings, so I confided in a teacher. With her help, I found a therapist.

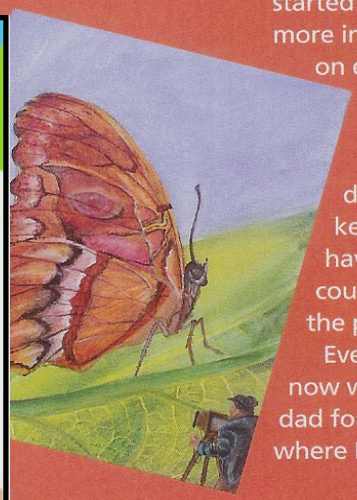
His abuse totally ripped my family apart

At first it was really hard to talk about what was going on at home, but I started sorting things out. I learned it was *not* OK to treat people the way my dad treated us. I've been w[illegible] on developing better communication skills.

Then I joined Break the Cycle Youth Voices. I had to do community service for school credit and there was something about the organization that set off a spark in me. I started by passing out pamphlets at fairs and then I got more involved. Now I'm passionate about educating others on emotional and physical abuse. I wouldn't want anyone to go through what I have, and my story isn't as severe as so many others I've heard.

Youth Voices teaches teens about dating and domestic violence through outreach programs. The key to handling abusive situations is education. Not having the right information hindered me because I couldn't identify the problem, and if you can't identify the problem, you can't identify the solution.

Even though my parents are still married, my mom now works and is happy she doesn't have to rely on my dad for everything. And I'm getting ready to go to college where I won't have to deal with my father.



The author's name has been withheld to protect her identity.

If you need help or information about domestic violence, call 800/988-TEEN, or check out BreakTheCycle.org.

peggy lipton: the mom squad

A force of one, Peggy Lipton uses straight talk and motherly advice to teach teens to break the cycle of domestic violence

The students who were gathered at Southern California's Santa Monica High School to hear Peggy Lipton speak looked no older than the actress was when she landed her breakout role as Julie Barnes, a teen runaway turned undercover agent on the 1968–1973 hit TV series *The Mod Squad*. In fact, most probably knew her only from her role as Kelly Foster on the WB's *Popular*. Still, they listened with rapt attention as she shared with them a painful story from her own teenage years. "I don't know you, but I do know what you're going through if you're involved with someone who is violent," she said to them. "It's scary and confusing."

Lipton went on to tell the students about

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rage and a friend called the police to intervene. "When I was your age, I had no one to talk to about what was happening to me. But I can promise you that no matter what you're going through, there's help out there for you," she said. "You are not alone."

At least not as long as there is Break the Cycle, a Los Angeles–based nonprofit organization devoted to educating 12- to 22-year-olds about domestic violence. Lipton, 55, joined the group last year, and she has been a tireless supporter of it ever since. "When I heard that there were these teenage girls who were getting restraining orders against abusive partners, I was troubled," Lipton says of her motivation for joining the organization.

As a youth advocacy group, Break the Cycle offers not only education but also early crisis intervention and free legal counsel and representation to young victims in need. "It isn't uncommon for young people to lack the knowledge that domestic violence isn't just a bad thing to do, but that it is also

"As a mother of two daughters, I know how important it is to educate our children," says Lipton, who spends time spreading awareness among teens (above).

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Lipton discusses domestic violence with BTC founder Meredith Blake and students.

illegal and that crimes have consequences," says Meredith Blake, an attorney who founded the organization in 1995. "We need to be talking to kids about this issue before they get involved in unhealthy relationships. There's incredible hope when you intervene at this early age, instead of waiting until these girls become abused women."

Despite a hectic schedule (her projects include the upcoming films *Skipped Parts*, with Drew Barrymore, and *The Intern*, with Gwyneth Paltrow), Lipton is committed to doing what she can to help educate teens about abuse before it starts and raise money for the cause. Indeed, she says, "I'm ready to go to Washington [to lobby], if it would make a difference in legislation or funding for programs [such as Break the Cycle]."

Lipton has always felt passionately about alerting young people to the dangers of domestic violence. She recalls discussing domestic abuse with her two daughters, by ex-husband Quincy Jones, back when the girls were high school students. (Kidada, 27, and Rashida, 25, are now both actresses; Rashida co-stars on Fox's *Boston Public*.) "One of my daughters recently told me that our conversation about domestic abuse helped her because she knew that I was there for her and that I would not judge her, no matter what happened to her," Lipton says. "That's what it means to 'break the cycle.' It all starts with self-respect that every parent is capable of instilling in their child." **—Monica Corcoran**

To find out more about Break the Cycle, visit www.break-the-cycle.org or call 888-988-8336. Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to: Break the Cycle, P.O. Box 64996, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

TONY TENNANT

breakingNEWS

ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER WINTER 2010

Break the Cycle
Empowering Youth to End Domestic Violence

Have a Heart Campaign

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. To celebrate, Break the Cycle is launching our "Have a Heart" Campaign.

We invite everyone from teens to teachers to elected officials to raise awareness about dating violence and take action against abuse.

Get to the Heart of the Matter – On February 10, students from across the nation will hear a message of healthy relationships as part of their morning announcements. The first 100 schools to register will receive a free copy of Break the Cycle's [Ending Violence] curriculum, courtesy of Mary Kay Inc. Register your school today at haveaheartcampaign.org.

Wear Your Heart on Your Sleeve – Attach a heart cut-out or sticker to your sleeve every day in February. Update your Facebook status to the symbol for a heart with the message: "My heart is on my sleeve. Learn why at haveaheartcampaign.org."

HOPE with All Your Heart – February is the perfect time to join Break the Cycle's HOPE. You'll instantly become part of a membership organization dedicated to ending violence. We're featuring new ways for HOPE members to take action every week this month, such as writing letters to urge policy-makers to "put their hearts in the right place" and increase protection for youth experiencing abuse. Don't miss out!

Have a Heart-to-Heart – Share information about the warning signs of abuse and healthy relationship behavior with your child or friend. We have all the tools to get you started at haveaheartcampaign.org.

Heart Someone – Break the Cycle is premiering health-e relationship cards as part of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. Send a card and spread the love at haveaheartcampaign.org.

With national attention on dating violence, you can make a real difference in raising awareness. "Have a Heart" – join Break the Cycle. <3

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* **Check out our newly designed website breakthecycle.org in mid-February!**

Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year! I am absolutely thrilled to welcome 2010. This year, Break the Cycle is poised to expand our role as a leader in the domestic violence movement. I have no doubt this will be one of our most exciting, challenging and important years to date.

Last year everyone at Break the Cycle worked hard to build a broad base of partners, from Mary Kay Inc. to Girl Scouts to MTV to the Family Violence Prevention Fund. These friends are helping us lay a stable foundation for the monumental plans ahead.

We are hosting the **National Resource Center** for Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month—a hub of information for service-providers, parents, teachers and students nationwide available at teenDVmonth.org.

We restructured the organization to place greater emphasis on our strongest assets—our talented staff, our institutional knowledge about serving teens and our focus on technology-based service delivery. Among these changes, we promoted Colleen Gallopin to Director of Training & Technical Assistance to oversee the expansion of our tools that bolster existing programs and resources in communities across the country.

We are launching the **Ask Anything! widget**—an interactive tool that allows our online help resource to exist beyond its home base on thesafespace.org and seamlessly integrate with any other website. Now, teens can connect directly to the help they need to avoid and escape abusive relationships from anywhere in cyberspace.

When I reflect on the incredible accomplishments of 2009, I am filled with enormous gratitude for the remarkable effort of our staff, volunteers and supporters. Because of your dedication, Break the Cycle succeeded in the face of a daunting economy and a dramatic increase in demand for our services. Thank you so much for your continued support of our mission to end domestic violence. Let's make 2010 our year to remember!

Sincerely,

Marjorie Gilberg
Executive Director

CONTACT US
5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 1150
Los Angeles, CA 90045

P.O. Box 21034
Washington, DC 20009

www.breakthecycle.org
www.thesafespace.org

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SUPPORTER spotlight

Break the Cycle's work would not be possible without the generous support from the following:

The US Department of Justice **Office on Violence Against Women** granted Break the Cycle nearly $400,000 to continue serving as its go-to expert on teen dating violence. In the coming year, we will target rural communities to ensure these underserved youth get the help they need.

As part of the Recovery Act, the **DC Office of Victim Services** gave more than $100,000 to Break the Cycle, allowing us to hire an additional attorney and expand our local legal services to teens. The **DC Justice Grants Administration** also supported our local DC programs with a grant of nearly $54,000.

The US Department of Justice **Office for Victims of Crime** awarded Break the Cycle nearly $75,000 to underwrite a public education campaign engaging sexual-minority youth around dating violence. This ground-breaking initiative will bring together community leaders from across Southern California as we address the unique needs LGBTQ youth face when encountering abuse.

RGK Foundation gave Break the Cycle $20,000 to adapt our [Ending Violence] curriculum for select regional Girl Scout Councils. Launching in 2010, this partnership will teach thousands of young women across several states how to prevent, diagnose and escape unhealthy relationships.

This year, Break the Cycle launched the [Ending Violence] Residency, our comprehensive school-readiness program, in Los Angeles with a grant of $25,000 from **Verizon Foundation** and in Washington, DC with a grant of $5,000 from **Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation**.

Other notable funders of our Los Angeles education programs include **Macy's Foundation** who gave $7,500, as well as **Northrop Grumman** and **TJX Foundation** who donated $5,000 each. **Target** contributed $4,000 to support our local work in both offices, while **Soroptimist International LA West-Santa Monica** made a gift of $2,700 towards our Los Angeles efforts.

Our Washington, DC office extended its support base with **The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation** renewing their gift of $10,000 and **The DC Bar Foundation** making its first grant of $5,000. These gifts support Break the Cycle's comprehensive efforts to address abuse, including our direct legal services to DC teens.

Long time supporter **Liz Claiborne Foundation** renewed its commitment to Break the Cycle's work with $15,000 for our education and help services in Los Angeles County.

Break the Cycle is pleased to thank our many supporters for joining us in ending dating violence.

Yes! I want to give in honor of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation to support Break the Cycle.

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Mail to: Break the Cycle, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 1150, Los Angeles, CA 90045

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survivor spotlight

Recently, we received an email from a frightened young woman whose boyfriend had threatened to kill her. She needed protection and a safe place to go, but was scared to ask for help. Her boyfriend had easy access to legal resources – something she worried would be nearly impossible for her to get.

Within two days, we were able to connect her to legal services in her community and a local shelter where she could find a safe haven. Without **thesafespace.org,** she might not have found the help she needed to escape abuse.

Ending an abusive relationship is never easy, and many teens don't know where to get help. Break the Cycle connects teens with the resources they need through thesafespace.org, the most comprehensive site for young people experiencing abuse.

LATEST BTCYP NEWS

Break the Cycle Young Professionals (BTCYP) is Growing!

In December, our BTCYP Leadership Committee in Washington, DC hosted five successful fundraising events themed around beer-tasting, clothing swap and wine and cheese. Through these parties, the committee of 12 young professionals engaged the DC community in helping to end teen dating violence.

In October 2009, BTCYP Los Angeles hosted another fun Bingo event at Hamburger Mary's in West Hollywood, CA. The committee is pleased to announce that plans for The UnMasquerade 2010 are in full swing. The event is scheduled to take place in Los Angeles in April.

For a calendar of events and to learn more, visit breakthecycle.org or contact btcyp@breakthecycle.org.

Thank you to our Donors

Break the Cycle gratefully acknowledges our generous donors. The listing below reflects donors with cash contributions over $100 in 2009.

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Louis & Dolores Zaccaro
Michael Zaccaro
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GIFTS WERE MADE TO BREAK THE CYCLE IN TRIBUTE TO:
Diann Ackard
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Jon Blankenberg
Ali Boden
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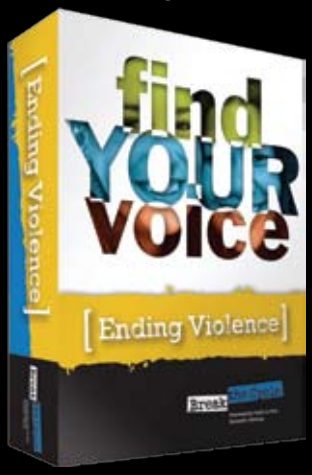
Jennika Kirkbride
Veronica Meza
Mae Philpott
Pete Pryor
Quon, Yee and Harada Families
Caroline Rogus
Christibelle Salazar
Chai Shenoy
Natasha Snyder and Baby
Renato Villena, Sr.
Brigit

New Resources

FROM BREAK THE CYCLE

[ENDING VIOLENCE] CURRICULUM

Educating youth to end dating abuse.



ASK ANYTHING! WIDGET

Connecting teens to life-saving services.

MODEL POLICY

Helping schools comprehensively address dating violence

✱ Find out more at www.breakthecycle.org

Break the Cycle
Empowering Youth to End Domestic Violence

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Los Angeles, CA 90045

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