



## Warning Signs for Teen Relationships

Teens are bombarded by violent media. The subtle introduction of disrespect and berating verbal language has occurred causing our teens to be insensitive to the violent nature of what is being presented.

Enticing commercials and cultural norms develop an attitude of entitlement. Self-absorption is reinforced. These attitudes permeate relationships that can ultimately destroy a teen's self image and spirit. This is becoming evident in the statistics now published.

- 1 in 4 teen relationships are abusive.
- 1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend or peer who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their partner.
- Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up.
- 13% of teenage girls who said they have been in a relationship report being physically hurt or hit.
- More than 1 in 4 teenage girls in a relationship (26%) report enduring repeated verbal abuse.
- Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser.

We find evidence of abuse occurring not only in boy/girl relationships, but girls are bullying other girls and boys are being violent with other boys. Patterns of behavior are being established which will affect relationships into their adulthood years.

It is important for teens to learn how to choose their traveling companions wisely and be aware of signs that point to abusive behavior that seeks to control another.

Teens look forward to driving. The person behind the steering wheel is in control of the car. The passenger is at the mercy of the driver and safety can become an issue. Knowing the signs of unhealthy relationships are essential.

### Warning Signs

#### Does he/she . . .

- ⊗ Become jealous of your other relationships?
- ⊗ Call, text, or email numerous times during a day?
- ⊗ Expect an immediate phone call or text back?
- ⊗ Often make the decisions of where to go, what to do, and when?
- ⊗ Demand that you spend most of your time with them?
- ⊗ Call you names or threaten you?
- ⊗ Often criticize your appearance?
- ⊗ Hit, kick, punch, shove, or physically hurt you when they are angry?
- ⊗ Often have angry outbursts?
- ⊗ Blame you for their problems and behavior?
- ⊗ Treat you nicely in public, but demean and hurt you in private?
- ⊗ Become easily angered or irritated?
- ⊗ Disrespect your parents?

- ⊗ Demand an exclusive relationship?
- ⊗ Criticize your friends and family?
- ⊗ Make you do things you are not comfortable doing?
- ⊗ Stalk you?
- ⊗ Attack or make fun of your beliefs and opinions?
- ⊗ Demean or joke about you in the presence of others?
- ⊗ Require sex in any form from you?

#### Do you . . .

- ⊗ Feel the need to always defend yourself?
- ⊗ Have to give an accounting of your time when you are away from him/her?
- ⊗ Need to ask permission to do something that does not include him/her?
- ⊗ Feel afraid of him/her?
- ⊗ Feel that you cannot do some of the activities you once did because he/she does not want you to?
- ⊗ Feel your thoughts, opinions, and feelings are not being considered?
- ⊗ Make excuses for his/her behavior?

Recognizing these warning signs is the first step in removing oneself from a destructive relationship. Tell a trustworthy person, seek help and resources, and take the next step to be completely safe. No one can do it alone. It is a matter of choice.

By Paula Silva