DATING VIOLENCE

A resource developed by Blackburn Center

How to help her?
• You may get mixed messages and she can’t ask for help but don’t get discouraged.
• Help her feel better about herself. Don’t blame or criticize her.
• Help build a support system with adults, family and other friends. Invite her places.
• Don’t spread gossip or rumors.
• Listen and do not judge. Trust is essential.
• Don’t put yourself at risk.
• Do not make decisions for her.
• Accept what she says.
• Tell her you care about her and are worried about her. Don’t give up on her.
• Assist with setting up a safety plan.
• Don’t make her choose between you or him. Don’t give ultimatums.
• Encourage her to tell a trusted adult. If she won’t and is in danger, tell her you are going to tell an adult that will help.
• Encourage her to get counseling. Call Blackburn Center.
• Talk with her in private. Allow her to talk.
• Let her know why you’re concerned. Be specific about incidents and identify them.

How to help him?
• He has to recognize the pressures he’s under and take responsibility for himself.
• Be specific about what you saw and how it made you feel. Identify his actions.
• Take a stand and give him a reality check that he can be arrested and it is a crime.
• Urge him to seek help by talking to a coach, counselor, mentor or clergy.
• Offer to get information on the topic.
• Don’t make him feel ashamed of himself.
• Talk about non-violent ways to handle anger. Don’t put yourself at risk.
• Don’t accept his excuses or blame.
• Don’t threaten him with violence.
• Don’t laugh at degrading jokes as this signals acceptance of abusive behavior.
• Reject the behavior not the person.

HELPFUL WEBSITES
www.blackburncenter.org
www.empowered.org
www.fvpf.org
www.girlsinc.org
www.pcadv.org
www.ncadv.org
www.menovercomingviolence.org

RESOURCES FOR THIS BROUCHURE
Family Violence Prevention Fund; National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence; Human Relations Media: Dealing With Teen Dating Abuse; Liz Claiborne Women’s Work Teen Handbook; The National Center For Victims of Crime and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

BLACKBURN CENTER SERVICES
• 24-Hour Hotline for crisis counseling and referrals
• Counseling and Therapy
• Support Groups
• Emergency Shelter for battered women and their dependent children
• Medical and Legal Advocacy
• Student Awareness Programs
• Community Education Programs
• In-Service Trainings
All services are free and confidential.

CONTACT INFORMATION
24-Hour Hotline
724-836-1122 or
1-888-832-2272
Administrative & Counseling Offices
724-837-9540
Fax: 724-837-3676
Website:
www.blackburncenter.org

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Did you know?
• 90-95% of teen dating violence is perpetrated by a boyfriend towards a girlfriend.
• 70% of teenage and college women who are sexually assaulted, are raped during the course of a date. (The National Center For Victims of Crime and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2002)

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**Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship**

- He has a history of bad relationships.
- He blames her or others for his problem.
- He gets serious too quickly—is too quick to say “I love you”.
- He believes he is superior and doesn’t take her opinions seriously.
- He has unpredictable mood swings—she worries about his reactions.
- He is jealous and possessive—checks up on her all the time.
- He blames or faults her for the mistreatment—says she provoked him or “she pushed my buttons”.
- She makes excuses for his behavior or apologizes for his behavior towards her.
- He is controlling, bossy and makes all the decisions.
- He uses guilt trips like “If you loved me you would do this or that” or “I need you so much”.
- Family and friends warn her about the relationship and are concerned for her safety.
- He may use drugs and/or alcohol as an excuse for being abusive.
- She frequently cancels plans at the last minute for reasons that sound untrue.
- He loses his temper, may even break things or hit things when he is mad.
- She seems worried about upsetting him or making him angry.

**Warning Signs Continued**

- She gives up things that used to be important to her such as spending time with family or friends or other activities. She is becoming more and more isolated.
- Her weight, appearance or grades have changed dramatically. These could be signs of depression which could indicate abuse as well.
- She has injuries that cannot be explained or the explanations do not make sense.
- He always apologizes for his abusive behavior—says “I promise I’ll never do it again” but the behavior repeats itself.
- He pressures her for sex.
- He threatens to hurt her or makes suicide threats.

There are many signs of dating violence. Dating violence is a pattern of abusive behaviors which doesn’t usually start with him hitting her out of the blue—it generally starts after a history of verbal and emotional abuse to bring her sense of self-worth down. By the time the physical violence starts, her self-esteem is seriously damaged.

**Why is he abusive?**

- Societal pressures to be a ‘real man’: real men don’t cry; real men take charge; real men must be tough, strong, breadwinners, learn to fight, never show affection for another man, play sports and BE DOMINANT OVER THEIR PARTNER.
- He is unable to express or manage his emotions.
- He is insecure and confused about aggression and power.
- He has learned that violence is a tool to get what he wants and to control others.
- He learns to manipulate to get his way.
- He doesn’t know how to get help.
- He grew up in an abusive household.
- He believes he has the “right” to do it.

**If you are being abused, you might...**

- Believe it’s your fault.
- Feel angry, sad, lonely, depressed or confused.
- Feel helpless to stop the abuse.
- Feel anxious, trapped, threatened, ashamed or humiliated.
- Worry about what might happen next.
- Feel like you can’t talk to family or friends.
- Be afraid of getting hurt.
- Feel protective of your boyfriend.
- Feel bad about yourself because he says you are stupid, lazy, ugly, worthless, helpless, crazy or things like that.

**These are normal reactions to being abused. You are not alone and it isn’t your fault.**

**Why doesn’t she just leave?**

- Once her self-esteem has been broken down, it can be very hard to leave.
- Violence comes in cycles where he will apologize and say he’ll never do it again.
- She may think she can change him.
- She doesn’t want the relationship to end just the abuse. He isn’t always abusive.
- Peer pressure and social status to have a boyfriend and feel accepted.
- Couples share the same friends. The break up will pose questions and problems. What if our friends don’t believe me? What if they choose him?
- Boys who are violent in private can appear calm and caring in public.
- She feels ashamed, guilty and embarrassed.
- He convinces and persuades others that it is her fault and she is “crazy” or “a slut”.
- She doesn’t know what to do and where to go for help.
- Friends and family don’t support her or don’t understand why or how this happens.
- She believes she deserves it and/or blames it on another situation like her upbringing.