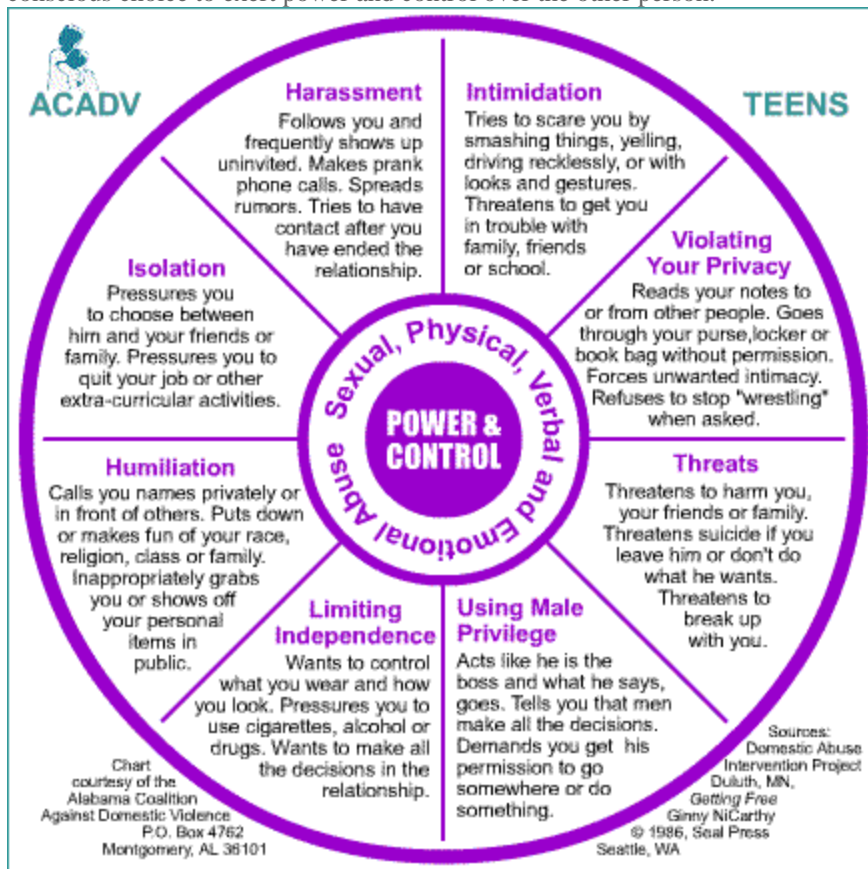


Teen Dating Violence
By Nicole Majka, MS, LPC, CDVP of Heritage Counseling Center, Inc.

According to recent statistics from the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, **1 in 5 teens** who have been in a serious relationship report being **hit, slapped or pushed by a partner**. The helpline also states that **1 in 3 girls** who have been in a serious relationship say they've been concerned **about being physically hurt** by their partner and, **1 in 4 teens** who have been in a serious relationship say their boyfriend or girlfriend has tried to prevent them from **spending time with friends or family**; the same number have been pressured to only spend time with their partner. **Nearly 1 in 4 girls** who have been in a relationship (23%) reported **going further sexually than they wanted** as a result of pressure.

When most people hear the terms Domestic Violence or Teen Dating Violence they think of physical abuse. However, there are many other aspects of abuse which include verbal, emotional and sexual. The majority of young women and men in abusive relationships experience more verbal and emotional abuse than physical. Physical abuse is often the last to occur while verbal and emotional signs are usually present in the beginning. Major red flags of dating violence include, but not limited to, jealousy, possessiveness and controlling behavior. The former may include: checking cell phones and text messages; restricting or forbidding their partner to speak to classmates or friends of the opposite sex; isolation from family and friends; excessive phone calls, text messages or instant messages; name calling; putdowns; blaming; and threatening to kill themselves or their partner if they threaten to terminate the relationship. Abuse always involves one person making a conscious choice to exert power and control over the other person.



Teen dating violence occurs for many reasons one of which is inexperience with dating relationships. Others may be the considerable peer pressure to date, gender roles assigned by society, romantic views of love, and the desire to be loved and cared for, especially if their own families are dysfunctional. Teens may stay in the relationship because they have low self esteem, fear there will be no one to talk to, disbelief that this is really happening to them, and even fear for their life. Consequences of staying in a violent relationship include depression, anxiety, drop in grades, low self esteem, eating disorders, cutting, substance use, isolation,

unexplained bruises, broken bones, and in some cases loss of life. Abusive relationships are not limited by age, sex, socioeconomic status or race.

If you suspect a student or other teen may be in an abusive teen dating relationship, help is available. Talk to the teen about the warning signs you see; it is likely that they may not recognize that they are in a bad relationship. Possessiveness and jealousy may feel good initially because it feels good to be cared about and loved. However, this behavior is extremely unhealthy. Support the teen by showing her or him the warning signs of abuse or call a local domestic violence agency for assistance. Don't be surprised if you are met with resistance, just keep pointing out the facts and, if necessary, help parents to obtain an order of protection for safety reasons. Having his or her schedule changed may also be a good option. Always remember abuse is a choice and it is never the victims fault!

For additional resources on Teen Dating Violence see the following websites and phone numbers:

www.knowtheredflags.com

www.breakthecycle.org

www.thedatesafeproject.org

www.loveisrespect.org

www.ilcadv.org (Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence)

National Teen Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-866-331-9474

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

Illinois Domestic Violence 24 Hour Helpline: 1- 877-863-6338

For questions or concerns regarding this article please contact Nicole Majka at Heritage Counseling Center Inc at 815-577-8970 Ext 203 or email nmajka@heritagecounseling.com .