

# Unhealthy Relationships

## Abuse Examples

## Where to Find Help

### **Brian and Sarah (Does this sound familiar):**

When Brian and Sarah began dating, her friends were envious. Brian was smart, sensitive, funny, athletic, and good-looking. Even her mom loved him.

For the first couple of months, Sarah seemed happy. She started to miss her friends and family, though, because she was spending more time with Brian and less time with everyone else. That seemed easier than dealing with Brian's endless questions. He worried about what she was doing at every moment of the day.

But Sarah's friends became concerned when her behavior started to change. She lost interest in the things she once enjoyed, like swim meets and going to the mall. She became secretive and moody. When her friends asked if she was having trouble with Brian, she told them nothing was wrong.

Healthy relationships involve respect, trust, and consideration for the other person. Sadly, some relationships can turn bad. In fact, 1 in 11 high school students report being physically hurt by a date.

### **What Is Abuse?**

Abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual. Physical abuse means any form of violence, such as hitting, punching, pulling hair, and kicking. Abuse can happen in both dating relationships and friendships.

Emotional abuse (stuff like teasing, bullying, and humiliating others) can be difficult to recognize because it doesn't leave any visible scars. Threats, intimidation, putdowns, and betrayal are all harmful forms of emotional abuse that can really hurt — not just during the time it's happening, but long afterward, too.

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone, guy or girl. It's never right to be forced into any type of sexual experience that you don't want.

The first step in getting out of an abusive relationship is to realize that you have the right to be treated with respect and not be physically or emotionally harmed by another person.

## **Signs of Abusive Relationships**

Important warning signs that you may be involved in an abusive relationship include when someone:

- harms you physically in any way, including slapping, pushing, grabbing, shaking, smacking, kicking, and punching
- tries to control different aspects of your life, such as how you dress, who you hang out with, and what you say
- frequently humiliates you or makes you feel unworthy (for example, if a partner puts you down but tells you that he or she loves you)
- threatens to harm you, or self-harm, if you leave the relationship
- twists the truth to make you feel you are to blame for your partner's actions
- demands to know where you are at all times
- constantly becomes jealous or angry when you want to spend time with your friends

Unwanted sexual advances that make you uncomfortable are also red flags that the relationship needs to focus more on respect. When someone says stuff like "If you loved me, you would . . ." that's also a warning of possible abuse, and is a sign that your partner is trying to manipulate you. A statement like this is controlling and is used by people who are only concerned about getting what they want — not caring about what you want. Trust your intuition. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

## **Signs That a Friend Is Being Abused**

In addition to the signs listed above, here are some signs a friend might be being abused by a partner:

- unexplained bruises, broken bones, sprains, or marks
- excessive guilt or shame for no apparent reason
- secrecy or withdrawal from friends and family
- avoidance of school or social events with excuses that don't seem to make any sense

A person who is being abused needs someone to hear and believe him or her. Maybe your friend is afraid to tell a parent because that will bring pressure to end the relationship. People who are abused often feel like it's their fault — that they "asked for it" or that they don't deserve any better. But abuse is never deserved. Help your friend understand that it is not his or her fault. Your friend is not a bad person. The person who is being abusive has a serious problem and needs professional help.

A friend who is being abused needs your patience, love, and understanding. Your friend also needs your encouragement to get help immediately from an adult, such as a parent, family member, or guidance

counselor. Most of all, your friend needs you to listen without judging. It takes a lot of courage to admit being abused; let your friend know that you're offering your full support.

## Resources

Please Note: By clicking a link to any resource listed on this page, you will be leaving the TeensHealth site.



### **National Domestic Violence/Abuse Hotline**

<http://www.thehotline.org/>

Call: (800) 799-SAFE



### **National Center for Victims of Crime**

<http://www.ncvc.org>

This organization is devoted to helping victims of crime recover and rebuild their lives. Call: (800) FYI-CALL



### **Love Is Respect**

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

This site is the online home of the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, a community where you can find support and information to understand dating abuse. You can talk one-on-one with a trained advocate 24/7 who can offer support and connect you to resources.



### **The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network**

<http://www.rainn.org>

Call: (800) 656-HOPE

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/for-someone-else/is-my-relationship-healthy-quiz/>

The Hotline: 832-416-1177

Teen Talk: 832-416-1199 (call) or 281-201-4430 (text)