



Know! Your Students' Risk for Dating Abuse

February is known as the month of love. With that in mind, Know! focuses back-to-back Parent Tips on adolescent "love" relationships.

Many adults refer to adolescent love as 'puppy love,' downplaying the seriousness of the relationship. Know! warns adults however to take caution, because to those tweens/teens involved, the relationship may be dangerously serious. We're talking dating abuse, and it's happening in every community in every state across the nation.

Though we tend to think of dating in the traditional sense as an occurrence for older teens, about 72% of younger teens and even preteens consider themselves to be in dating relationships. And while the majority of adolescent relationships are healthy or at least harmless, far too many are unhealthy, abusive or somewhere in between.

Dating abuse occurs when one partner exerts power and control over the other. The abuse may be **Physical, Verbal, Emotional** and/or **Sexual**. One in three adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of one of the types of dating abuse. However, when dating abuse occurs, teens usually tell no one and when they do tell, it is typically to another teen, not an adult.

Here are some additional facts to Know!

- Violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18;
- One in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend;
- One in four high school girls has been a victim of physical or sexual abuse;
- Middle school, high school and college age females are at greater risk for acquaintance rape than any other age group;
- While the majority of dating abuse victims are females, it can and does happen to males as well.

Dating abuse has devastating and long-lasting consequences for both female and male victims, putting them at increased risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behaviors and further domestic violence.

What is the take-away for teachers? The first step is to be aware of the issue and Know! that your students who are "dating" are at risk for dating abuse, as either a victim or a perpetrator. Children need to be taught what it means to be in a healthy relationship. In the following Know! Tip, we will discuss the characteristics of healthy, positive relationships and provide tips on getting this critical conversation started with your students.

Sources: LevelsRespect.org; BetweenFriendsChicago.org; DoSomething.org.

Talking regularly with kids about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using.

Know! urges you to encourage other parents to join Know!.

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