

# Talking To Your Teen About Dating Violence

**Break** the Cycle

Empowering Youth to End  
Domestic Violence

[breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org)  
[thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org)

**Dating Violence** is a pattern of behavior where one person uses threats of, or actually uses, physical, sexual, verbal or emotional abuse to control his or her dating partner.

**Dating Relationship** means a romantic or intimate social relationship between two individuals.

**Break the Cycle** engages, educates and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence.

It's never too early to talk to your teens about healthy relationships and dating violence. Starting conversations— even if you don't think your teen is dating — is one of the most important steps you can take to help prevent dating violence.

## Helpful tips for parents:

- Do your own research on teen dating violence to get the facts before talking to your teen. Start with the information and resources on [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org).
- Provide your teen with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behavior. Use examples from your own life, television, movies or music.
- Ask questions and encourage open discussion. Make sure you listen to your teen, giving them a chance to speak. Avoid analyzing, interruptions, lecturing or accusations.
- Keep it low key. Do not push if your teen is not ready to talk. Try again another time.
- Be supportive and nonjudgmental so they know they can come to you for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future.
- Admit to not knowing the answer to a particular question. This builds trust.
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that violence is never acceptable.
- Discuss options your teen has if they witness dating violence or experience it themselves.

- Remind your teen that they have the right to say no and must respect the rights of others.
- If your teen is in a relationship that feels uncomfortable, awkward or frightening, assure them that they can come to you. And remember — any decisions they make about the relationship should be their own.
- Contact Break the Cycle for helpful materials and find out if there are dating violence prevention programs in your community that can support you and your teen.

## Starter questions:

- Are any of your friends dating? What are their relationships like? What would you want in a relationship?
- Have you witnessed dating violence at school or among friends? How does it make you feel? Were you scared?
- Do you know what you would do if you witnessed or experienced abuse?
- Has anyone you know posted anything bad about a friend online? What happened afterwards?
- Would it be weird if someone you were dating texted you all day to ask you what you're doing?

For more information, you can visit [thesafespace.org](http://thesafespace.org).