



Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence



Winter 2016

Featured in this issue: *TEEN DATING VIOLENCE*

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From the Executive Director



Happy 2016 from OPDV! We hope that you all had a wonderful holiday season.

As you are planning your upcoming events, please remember that January is Stalking Awareness Month and Human Trafficking Month, and February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

Since the theme of this issue is teen dating violence, we have reached out to New York State teenagers to author the important insights in the pieces on the following pages. Many thanks to [STEPS to End Family Violence](#) Director of Teen Services & Strategic Partnerships Connie Márquez and her staff for helping the students in the NYC-funded [Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (RAPP) program provide our feature article: "Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective," by RAPP leaders Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita, and for assisting with our Q&A, in which students from

Truman High school in the Bronx responded anonymously to a survey about their relationships and their perspectives on the nature and dynamics of intimate partner abuse .

You will notice a special insert in this issue that addresses three questions about bullying that were asked of students in which STEPS runs RAPP services ; their answers provide valuable information for anyone working with youth. Although these three questions specifically address bullying behavior and the role of the active bystander (which students refer to as "Upstander"), both bullying and intimate partner violence are, at their very core, grounded in power and control, and bullying behavior among youth often segues into dating violence in adolescence and continues as domestic violence in adulthood.

We at OPDV wish you a peaceful and productive start to the New Year and look forward to our continued partnership in 2016.

Gwen Wright

#ICanDoSomething Teen Video Challenge

This February, in recognition of Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, OPDV is launching our first teen video challenge: #ICanDoSomething!

Based on [our 2015 #ICanDoSomething video campaign](#) aimed at teens, this year's challenge builds upon the theme of responding safely and responsibly to dating violence by telling others how they can create and support positive, healthy, nonviolent relationships.

While [last year's video](#) presented statistics, "red flags," and intervention strategies, our 2016 Challenge encourages all NYS teens aged 14-18 to create a 60-second video based on one of seven healthy relationship values, then upload the video to Youtube by January 31 for a chance to win amazing prizes and statewide recognition!

You can find links to the Challenge website at www.ICanDoSomethingChallenge.com

We'd love to see teens from *your* community represented among this year's entrants!

NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline 1-800-942-6906

English & español, Multi-language Accessibility
Nat'l Relay Service for Deaf or Hard of Hearing: 711
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
TDD: 1-866-604-5350
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January is Stalking Awareness Month



January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month



February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month

In Our Next Issue: Vicarious Trauma

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. In recognition of the professionals working with survivors, children, and offenders of domestic violence, we will dedicate our spring to vicarious trauma.

Did You Know...

In 2014, 873 family offense petitions were filed in NYS by individuals between 17-21 years of age, and 48 were filed by individuals aged 16 and under, for a total of 921 family offense petitions filed by individuals aged 21 and under.

This information was taken from the **2014 NYS Domestic Violence Dashboard**.

Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective

Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita, Horace Greeley Middle School, IS10, Queens, NYC

What image comes to your mind when you hear the word ‘bully’? The most typical image is of a ‘school-bully’: someone who taunts classmates inferior to them in size, strength or charisma. In reality, although this is a common scenario, it does not portray the whole picture of the infamous term “bully.” Bullying takes many forms such as physical, verbal, social, and cyber.

Anyone can fall prey to this detrimental act of terror. It is an act that is now globally acknowledged. But what use is the acknowledgement if it does not lead to a solution, or even a movement towards its eradication? We deny the existence of bullying to remain pallid and not voice our opinion on the controversial topic that brings tears to the eyes of the helpless or causes distress in the hearts of the countless who suffer in silence. So, according to our perspectives, we believe in reformation and change, and to change we must take steps to help visualize the effects of such acts of terror in the eyes of everyone.

Bullies thrive on the weaknesses of others. They have a distorted idea that if others feel powerless it will make them more powerful. Bullies crave both emotional and mental control, using fear and other tactics to help them feel superior - similar to teen dating violence, where one partner tries to gain power and control over the other using the very same tactics that are used by bullies.

In every bullying situation there is the bully and the victim. However, there is always the third participant: the bystander. The bystander participation can be either intentional or unintentional. Bystanders are often faulted for not standing up for the victims. But we understand where they are coming from because they don’t want to be the bully’s next target. People may say that bystanders can ask for help from teachers or counselors. But it doesn’t really make a difference because the bystander fears that the bully will hurt them next. From our own experiences, we have seen bullying and we wanted to stand up for the victim but were unable, due to our own fears of being the next victim. However, deep down we wanted to act to not only help the victim but ourselves too. Bystanders often don’t act, convincing themselves that it isn’t their problem or they don’t believe that their words or actions can be heard or make an actual difference; they feel powerless.

The question now is how do we empower the bystander? The answer is we need to let them know that they have the power to make significant change and that bullying is everyone’s problem. Social media has become a part of our life so why not let it work for us? Social media can be the tool to help promote anti-bullying and teen dating violence awareness and to empower bystanders to become upstanders! Teenagers can promote these ideas on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., and everyone can inform their friends.

Schools often have anti-bullying programs that tell us not to bully, but they don’t tell us how we can stop bullying, and there are very few programs that focus on teen dating violence. Students don’t want to be lectured by teachers about not bullying, because they feel that, if they are not going to be graded on something, then why care? But in reality, these are the things we have to face. Some students will not open up to teachers due to fear of being judged for being in an unhealthy relationship, or because they feel that teachers are not taking bullying seriously enough. (“Just ignore the bully” is often suggested.)

To get the attention of teenagers, we need people from our age group, our peers. While talking to our peers, we feel connected, feeling they may go through the same thing as us. No matter how friendly adults are, we still feel they are going to judge us. The next step is to get even the smallest amount of teens involved and get them to talk to each other. They will listen and most likely learn from each other. To make this possible, there should be more programs like the one at our school, Horace Greeley, the [Relationship Abuse Preventions Program](#) (RAPP). In RAPP, we learn about more than bullying and teen dating violence. RAPP provides us a place to have group discussions where we can be comfortable talking to others about our experiences. We also have guest speakers who share knowledge and advocacy, which make the discussions more interesting. Bringing awareness to people isn’t easy. Adults should take any opportunity to get teenagers to talk about these issues and to promote these ideas; you never know who is going through something like this, and by just promoting these ideas and talking about how to help someone who is experiencing bullying or dating violence, you can help a lot of people in different ways.

In truth, bullying and teen dating violence are happening, and will continue to happen until the collective body of students, teachers, and community do something to deter its progress. It may not stop anytime soon, but remaining sedentary and pallid about it will not help either. Therefore, we must increase public awareness by encouraging more programs like RAPP, which encourage people to stand up and speak up against bullying and teen dating violence. It is easier said than done, but we have to try, because the longer we wait for someone else to do something about it, the longer this problem will remain unsolved. As the saying goes, “You can’t climb the ladder of success with your hands in your pockets!” Let’s all start climbing together.



RAPP leaders Sara Ghoneim (L) and Farhin Puspita (R) proudly display “Bullying and Teen Dating Violence: Our Perspective,” the article they co-authored for OPDV’s winter 2016 bulletin.

Sara Ghoneim and Farhin Puspita are eighth graders at The Horace Greeley Middle School, IS10, in Queens, NYC. They are student Peer Leaders in their school’s [Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (RAPP), a bullying and abuse prevention program administered by [STEPS to End Family Violence](#), a program of [Edwin Gould Services for Children & Families](#). RAPP, which has been funded by New York City’s Human Resources Administration since 1999, delivers an array of services including prevention classes, intervention counseling, groups, staff development, community outreach and a summer Peer Leadership Training program.

Special Insert: Teen Bystanders “In Their Own Words”

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), “Violence in an adolescent relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence perpetration and/or victimization throughout life.”

In an effort to provide teens with better tools and resources to support safe, trusting, healthy relationships with their peers, their intimate partners, and the adults in their lives, we looked at what they had to say about bullying, about their fears and challenges, and their needs. Below are some of their responses. We thank them for their honesty and insights.

When have you felt empowered/safe to be an “Upstander?”

- When I had an adult or a friend I could trust
- When I told a boy to stop making fun of a kid
- When I confided in an adult in my school
- When I saw bullying going on
- When I stood up for my friends
- When my younger siblings got bullied
- Anytime I’ve known something was wrong
- When I broke up with my abusive boyfriend
- When I told a 9th-grader to stop bullying a 3rd-grader
- When my friend was called a “whore”
- In 6th grade, when my bully tried to hit me and I punched him
- Whenever I think someone is going to get hurt
- When I see peers being bullied online
- When someone else steps in first
- When I was in a support group of “no hate” and “no judgement”
- When I protested an issue I was passionate about
- When I saw someone with a disability being hurt by someone
- When I saw that someone needed me to stick up for them and I physically and emotionally connected with the victim
- When I helped a friend calm down instead of using violence

What are the challenges of being an “Upstander”?

- Being judged
- Being neglected by others
- Telling a bully to stop
- Being bullied myself
- Telling an adult
- Being called a “teller” or snitch
- Being different
- Being seen as a “buzz kill”
- Trying to understand what’s going on; it’s difficult to understand
- Being ridiculed
- Being seen as the bully myself
- Getting knocked out
- Being punished for intervening
- Escalating the situation
- Respecting boundaries; knowing when to step up and step back
- Being told that the situation “is none of your business”
- Not being sure about what to say
- Making the problem worse
- Being smaller than the bully.
- Encouraging more conflict
- Being laughed at/made fun of
- Being seen as a coward
- Confronting the bully when he/she is my friend
- Stopping the violence when other bystanders want it to continue
- Doubting I’m doing the right thing
- Hurting someone if I have to physically intervene

What can adults in your school do to support you and your peers?

- Explain that you shouldn’t feel unsafe to be an Upstander
- Step in if they see something bad happening, or involve more people to make sure nothing bad happens
- Separate me from bullies/punish the bullies
- Don’t accept kids with obnoxious behaviors
- Pay more attention
- Take action. No “sugar coating”
- Provide cameras to catch the bullies, or an alarm that goes off to alert the dean or principal that a bully is targeting someone
- Create a campaign to stop bullying
- Provide mediation for people with problems
- Just be there for students and listen
- Understand the dynamics of bullying
- Provide us with more programs, like cyber-bullying support groups and counseling for victims and bullies
- Support the victim, not the bully
- Encourage intellectual discussions about social issues instead of discouraging them
- Be Upstanders themselves
- Realize that “kids will be kids” does not justify bullying
- Let us have our own opinions
- Add more empowering sports and clubs

Q&A: Teens Talk About What Dating Violence Means to Them

This Q&A shows the results of a questionnaire conducted with students (age 13-19) at Harry S. Truman High School in the Bronx. The questionnaire was developed by a RAPP Peer Leader, who is also a member of Student Council, to better understand interpersonal relationship dynamics at her school, particularly regarding emotional abuse.

Q Do you talk to your parents about your relationships?

A Of the 582 students who answered this question, 135 (36%) answered yes.

Q Do you think jealousy is a form of abuse?

A While 135 (23%) of the 587 students who answered responded that, yes, jealousy is a form of abuse, the remaining students either said that they did not believe jealousy was a form of abuse (272/46%) or they were not sure (180/31%).

Q Do you think it's healthy if your partner is always trying to change you?

A A total of 586 students answered this question, and while 49 (8%) said that yes, they did think it was healthy, 485 (83%) answered no, they did not believe it was healthy, and 52 (9%) were unsure.

Q What do you think is the most common type of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Verbal, or Financial?

A The 568 students who responded to this question provided the following feedback:

- Physical: 168 (30%)
- Emotional: 158 (28%)
- Sexual: 67 (12%)
- Verbal: 164 (29%)
- Financial: 11 (2%)

Q Is it fair to check your partner's phone?

A The majority (255/44%) of the 585 students who answered this question responded that yes, it is fair to check their partner's phone, while 232 (40%) answered no, and 98 (17%) stated that they were unsure.

Q Do you know where to go/who to contact to report domestic violence?

A A total of 583 students answered this question, and 366 (63%) said that yes, they did know who to contact, while 131 (23%) said they did not know, and 86 (15%) said they were not sure.

According to [Day One](#) in New York City, "teaching young people about healthy relationships and ways to avoid physical dating violence can reduce physical and sexual dating violence by 60%." Since 1999, the [Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program](#) (Teen RAPP) in NYC has helped teens define and develop healthy relationships, recognize abuse and harassment, and safely help themselves and others.

Below, 68 RAPP middle and high school students share their experiences with the RAPP program, and provide valuable insight on the role that supportive programs and adults can play in addressing teen dating violence.

Since being involved with RAPP, students reported that they knew more about:

- Different types of relationships: 56 (82%)
- How to stay safe: 58 (85%)
- How to reach out in case they/ someone else needs help: 56 (82%)

When asked whether they had a strong relationship with a RAPP counselor:

- 36 (53%) students strongly agreed and 29 (43%) agreed that they had a strong relationship with a RAPP counselor

When asked whether their participation in RAPP has helped them be more accepting/tolerant they are of other people's points of

view, students responded:

- 27 (40%) students strongly agreed and 40 (59%) agreed that RAPP has helped them be more tolerant of others

Students reported that, since being aware of RAPP services in their school:

- They feel more comfortable in their school: 55 (81%)
- They are less likely to skip classes: 40 (59%)
- They are more involved in school: 51 (75%)
- They participate in RAPP: 58 (85%)

When asked to share their feelings about RAPP, students responded:

- "I am becoming a better person than I was before."

- "I am learning how to let people try and understand instead of pushing them away."
- "I feel good knowing I have someone to talk to."
- "Love RAPP!"
- "I have somewhere to go when I need help."
- "I feel more confident on what I say and how I respond as I am more informed."
- "I feel more comfortable talking with RAPP counselors."
- "I feel more able to spread awareness to others."
- "I feel more able to stand up for others when there's injustice."

Legislative Update

The following bills have recently been signed into law:

- The housing discrimination bill prohibits discrimination in rental, lease terms, or eviction procedures based on domestic violence victim status, and establishes a task force to study the impact of gender, source of income and DV status on access to affordable housing.
- Another bill requires the [Office of Court Administration](#) to establish a pilot in several Family Courts for electronic filing of family offense petitions, and allows victims to

request temporary orders of protection by audio-visual means.

- A new law requires police to have a victim's statement on a [Domestic Incident Report](#) (DIR) translated when the statement is not in English. Also, the [Victim Rights Notice](#), which must be given to all victims when a DIR is completed, must be translated into the most frequently spoken languages in New York State.
- The [Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act](#) was signed, to improve NYS's response to human trafficking. It adds new offenses and increased penalties for buyers

and traffickers and requires the development of policies and materials for police officers to use in assisting victims.

- Finally, a new law allows the [Department of Health](#) to conduct education and outreach for consumers, patients, and health care providers on the availability of free education or counseling programs provided by not-for-profit or government agencies assisting sexual assault or child pornography victims.

Please see [website](#) for information on additional bills signed into law.

Suzanne Cecala, Director of Public Awareness & Prevention



I am Suzanne Cecala, Director of the new Bureau of Public Awareness & Prevention. I'm so happy that the important work of promoting public

awareness and the prevention of domestic violence has been consolidated into one bureau under the leadership of Executive Director Gwen Wright, and I am honored to lead the charge. My bureau oversees the OPDV website, the quarterly Bulletin, public awareness campaigns like "Shine the Light," public information, the annual DV Dashboard, the Advisory Council, e-Alerts, publications, media outreach, and social media.

Prior to my 17 years at OPDV, I worked at the NYS Health Department,

promoting awareness of a multitude of health issues, such as HIV, cancer, teen pregnancy and...domestic violence. A background in marketing and design led me on this path and what has unfolded since then has been life-changing. It's both rewarding and humbling to think that I am able to make a difference in the lives of victims and survivors, family and friends. These courageous people guide my work every day and I'm proud to serve them and all New Yorkers as we work to end domestic violence.

New York State's Response to Human Trafficking

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, and a time to increase our vigilance by preventing and intervening in ways that enhance the safety of victims while supporting their transition to a life of dignity and self-worth.

Human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery, allows traffickers to profit by controlling and exploiting others.

Under US federal law, victims of human trafficking in the US include:

- Minors (under age 18) induced into commercial sex—referred to as Commercial Sexual Exploitation of

Children (CSEC)

- Adults (age 18 or over) involved in commercial sex via force, fraud, or coercion
- Children and adults forced to perform labor and/or services in conditions of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery through force, fraud, or coercion.

For many years, the [New York State Office of Children and Family Services](#) has provided services to trafficking victims statewide, along with [specific information](#) for Child Welfare Workers on identifying, assisting, and educating potential child trafficking victims.

Nationwide, as many as 300,000 minors are trafficked, and most of them are missing from their families when exploitation occurs. In response, [Governor Cuomo](#) has established an [Interagency Task Force](#) to help New Yorkers recognize and report human trafficking, and to train law enforcement and social and human services personnel in identifying this criminal violation of human rights. Additional efforts include targeted outreach along the NYS Thruway.

Please report suspected trafficking of children and adults to the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#).

NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence www.opdv.ny.gov

Please send any comments or content ideas to: opdvbulletin@opdv.ny.gov

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