

Parents

Talk with your teen about dating and healthy relationships. If you think your child is being abused by their boyfriend or girlfriend, the most important thing you can do is be supportive and remind them that help is available.

[Know the Warning Signs](#)

What to Look For

Is your child:

- More withdrawn than usual, or exhibiting changes to their personality?
- Spending less time with friends and family, and more time with their partner?
- Spending less time doing things they previously loved doing?
- Frequently preoccupied with their relationship?
- Exhibiting cuts or bruises?
- Starting to excessively apologize or being more self-critical?
- Making excuses for their partner's bad behavior or things they say?

Is their partner:

- Excessively texting, calling or messaging them on social media?
- Demanding to know where they are, who they are with and what they are doing?
- Putting your child down or making them feel bad about something?

Conversation Starters

- How are things going with (your partner)?
- How does (your partner) feel about your decision to _____?
- What do you think should happen in a healthy relationship?
- I noticed you don't really see (your partner) anymore, did something happen between you two?
- Have you ever seen anyone talk down to someone they are dating?
- Do any of your teachers ever talk about healthy relationships? Have they mentioned emotional abuse?

What to do

- Simply listen and be supportive. Your teen may need to “vent” about what happened. It's natural to want your teen to end the relationship and cut off contact, but there are a variety of reasons a teen may not be able to do this, including fear of retaliation, pressure from friends, and love. It is better to give support and keep lines of communication open so you are available to help when they are ready.

- Tell them that the abuse is not their fault, and that nothing they could do gives another person permission to treat them in a way that is abusive.
- With your teen's permission, reach out to others like coaches, teachers, friends, etc., all of whom may be able to help.
- If you need help talking to your teen, check out the resources at the end of this guide.

What NOT to do

- Wait for them to come to you.
- Judge them. Your teen may not share anything with you if they feel like you think they have done something wrong.
- Punish them. Punishing a victim of abuse only reinforces the belief that the abuse is their fault. It might also isolate your teen, making them feel like they can't talk to you or anyone else about the abuse.
- If you offer explanations, solutions or advice, make sure you don't make it sound like it is something they *must* do, and be advised that they will most likely decide what to do on their own.

Where to go from here

- Every county in New York State has a local domestic violence program with advocates standing by to help. The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline can help find a program near you. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call 1-800-942-6906, text 844-997-2121 or chat at opdv.ny.gov.
- An advocate can provide more information about how to create a [safety plan](#), how to get an order of protection, how to get counseling and how to be a better ally.

Resources

- [Love is Respect](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to Teen Dating Abuse](#)
- [Are You Modeling Respect at Home?](#)
- [10 Tips on Talking About Healthy Relationships with Teens.](#)
- [Conversation Starters About Tech Abuse](#)

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please call 911.