

October is Dating Violence Awareness Month



Middle school

The two biggest warning signs of an abusive relationship are jealousy and insults. Jealousy in particular can sometimes feel good. It can be masked as love or a lack of trust. Jealousy is used to isolate someone from their friends, family, and other support systems by controlling who the person can see or how they are supposed to behave.

Insults may only come out during arguments, or might be played off as just joking. Over time they may start to pick on vulnerabilities or secrets that were shared, become meaner, and make people start to doubt their worth or feel like they deserve to be treated this way.

What you can do

- While you might believe that middle school is too young for romantic relationships, starting conversations before youth start dating can help young people process the developing curiosity and peer conversations about relationships.
- Support children of different sexes and gender identities to hang out as friends. If they are hanging out with someone of the opposite gender, try not to assume or tease that hanging out equals dating.
- Reassure young people that it is okay to disengage and take a break from friends and peers who are being mean. One benefit of online platforms is the ability to block and limit interactions with people. It might feel harder to do in person with small social circles. Brainstorm together about options to disengage that feel protective and safe.
- Connect with young people about their online lives, while letting them make mistakes. Help them to come up with their own strategies and solutions to problems that arise. It helps them feel confident coming to you for support, and helps them make the best decisions for themselves about safety.



**When we understand the dynamics
of dating violence, we can prevent it.**

end violence
wise
share hope ♦ change lives

#DVAM2021