

October is Dating Violence Awareness Month



High 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

- Model healthy ways to be in relationships. Share the times when you have faced challenges or conflict, what worked well for you, or what you wish you had done at the time to prioritize your safety and happiness.
- Express your concerns about behaviors that are controlling, insulting, or dismissive. Reinforce your values and encourage teens to be kind and respectful of others.
- If abuse is a concern, it is helpful to focus on the person and behaviors that are harmful, and not make the victim feel blamed for putting themselves in harm's way. You can show support by helping them process what happened without them feeling shame or responsibility for the abuse. You can encourage them to think about what will work best for them to keep them safe moving forward, and ask them how you can help.
- Remind young people that they do not have to date if they do not want to, and they can end a relationship for any reason.
- If you are worried, try to stay curious with teens. Explain the behaviors that are concerning, and ask open ended questions.



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

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Some conversation starters:

- What do you like about your crush? What are the great parts of your relationship?
- How does it make you feel when a person does ...?
- What are the things you worry about in your relationship? How do you talk about your concerns with your partner?
- Do you ever feel like there are expectations or assumptions about your relationship that you never agreed to? Where did they come from? How do you bring those up with your partner?
- What do your friends/peers think about your relationship? Do you think those opinions are accurate?
- What are the trends at school about dating? How do you feel about those?
- What relationships do you look up to? Why?



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