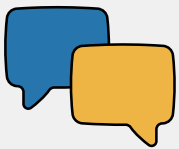




# What Is Teen Dating Violence?



Teen dating violence involves a pattern of behaviors used by a teen to gain power or control over a current, former, or potential dating partner. These behaviors may be physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, social, digital, or involve threats.



Even a single incident can be considered abuse when it involves threatening behavior, creates fear for safety, or meets the criminal definition of abuse, including assault, stalking, or harassment.

## Understanding the Patterns of Teen Dating Power and Control

Teen dating violence does not usually start with physical harm. Often, it begins with subtle efforts to control, isolate, and manipulate a partner. The most common tactics used in teen relationships include the following:





**Isolation and exclusion:** Limiting contact with friends or family or restricting participation in school activities. This can include turning the victim against social supports or telling them they are not prioritizing the relationship.



**Peer pressure:** Pressuring or coercing a partner into uncomfortable situations.



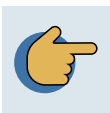
**Emotional abuse and anger:** Name-calling, insults, humiliation, or making a partner feel worthless.



**Social status manipulation:** Leveraging popularity or social reputation to control, embarrass, or isolate a partner.



**Intimidation:** Using gestures, looks, or actions that create fear. What may seem subtle to an outsider might feel threatening to the person experiencing it. If they feel intimidated, it is intimidation.



**Minimize, deny, or blame:** Denying abuse happened, downplaying its severity, or shifting blame onto the victim.



**Threats:** Making threats of physical violence, self-harm, or revealing private information to exert control. Threats may be subtle, such as showing off a weapon.



**Sexual coercion:** Pressuring or guiltting a partner into sexual activities, objectifying them, body-shaming them, or controlling their appearance.



**Digital abuse:** Using phones, social media, or other technology to control, monitor, or humiliate a partner. This includes demanding passwords, tracking locations, or excessive texting.

**Recognizing these behaviors is the first step to intervention.**

# Recognizing the Signs of Teen Dating Violence

Educators may notice these signs in person, online, or through behavior changes and are uniquely positioned to notice when something feels off. If a student discloses abuse, always take it seriously.

The following are common signs that a student may be experiencing dating violence:

Victims Experiencing Dating Violence	
<p><b>Behavioral Signs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➔ Withdraw or isolate from their usual friends</li><li>➔ Spend all their time with their partner or their partner's friends</li><li>➔ Show sudden shifts in appearance, hygiene, mood, or personality</li><li>➔ Show abrupt changes in interest in school activities</li><li>➔ Show noticeable changes in attendance or academic performance</li><li>➔ Become obsessed with their dating partner</li><li>➔ Have unexplained injuries</li><li>➔ Excessively check their phone out of fear</li><li>➔ Signs of depression or low self-esteem</li></ul>	<p><b>Emotional Signs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➔ Appear anxious, fearful, withdrawn, or ashamed</li><li>➔ Have noticeable or sudden shifts in mood or confidence</li><li>➔ Low self-esteem, depression, or loss of confidence</li><li>➔ Guilt or embarrassment, especially following public or digital humiliation</li></ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Victims may appear more reactive or unstable than those causing harm; this is often used by those causing harm to shift blame.</p>

## Students Causing Harm in a Relationship

### Behavioral Signs

- ➔ Show aggressive behavior, bullying, or extreme jealousy
- ➔ Display signs of engaging in substance use or other risky behavior
- ➔ Show up around their partner unexpectedly
- ➔ Leave unwanted or unexpected gifts, such as flowers or chocolates, on their partner's desk or in their lockers; show affection; or send letters
- ➔ Closely follow or escort their partner
- ➔ Humiliate their partner in front of peers or spread harmful rumors
- ➔ Demand access to online passwords
- ➔ Track their partner's location
- ➔ Monitor their partner's social media interactions
- ➔ Physical positioning to take up space so that the victim has to make themselves smaller
- ➔ Stalking, physical or digital
- ➔ Frequent use of threats, blame shifting, or gaslighting

### Emotional Signs

- ➔ Appear irritable, angry, frustrated, or defensive
- ➔ Struggle with insecurities and low self-esteem, fueling controlling behaviors
- ➔ Use emotional manipulation by shifting blame or portraying themselves as victims, making it more difficult to identify what is really happening



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