

## Avoid dating danger

### Know the facts

- **Abuse won't just go away.** When one partner hits the other, chances are it will happen again. To stop future violence, the abusive partner *must* get professional help.
- **It can happen to you.** Abuse isn't something that only happens to other people.
- **Violence is against the law.** Seek help right away if a partner is violent.

**In an emergency, dial 9-1-1 or call the police department or sheriff's department.**



"I only date people who treat me with respect."

5

### Take steps to stay safe

- **Know the signs and watch for them.** Use what you know when you decide to date someone or take the next step in a relationship.
- **Be clear about behavior you won't accept and stick to your limits.** It's easier to get out and get help early in an abusive relationship.
- **Trust your feelings.** If something feels uncomfortable, pay attention. If you ever feel fearful or pressured when you're with your partner, do something about it. Leave. Speak out if you're in a safe place. Get to a safe place if you need to.
- **Have a support system.** Stay in touch with friends and family. Don't become isolated in your relationship. Talk with someone you trust—a friend, family member, counselor or health care provider.
- **Avoid drinking and drug use.** Alcohol and other drugs don't *cause* violence. But they can make it more likely to happen.

### Expect respect

- **You have a right to be respected.** People in healthy relationships feel loved and respected for who they are. Don't settle for less.
- **Respect yourself.** People sometimes think abuse is their fault. But no one deserves to be abused. Abuse is *always* the abuser's fault.

6

### Getting Help

- **Tell someone you trust.** Tell a friend, family member, school counselor, nurse or other health care provider.
- **Call a crisis center, shelter or hotline.** They can answer questions and give you a safe place to go. Look under "Women's Organizations" and "Crisis Intervention Services" in the Yellow Pages of your phone book.
- **Get counseling.** Most areas have centers that offer counseling and support groups. Some centers offer help to abusers, too.

Counseling Center  
Ferris State University  
1019 Campus Drive  
Big Rapids, MI 49307

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# Dating Dangers



Know how to spot abuse *before* it gets physical.

**Violence often starts with little things** that can be denied, ignored or forgiven. But, from there, a pattern of violence can grow quickly.

## It's not just about hitting

Dating violence usually begins with verbal and emotional abuse. These are often the first steps before physical and/or sexual violence.

- **Verbal or emotional violence.** One partner makes fun of, insults, bosses, controls and/or threatens the other.
- **Physical violence.** One partner grabs, shoves, slaps, pinches or hits the other.
- **Sexual violence.** One partner forces the other to have sex.

It's not unusual for 2 or more types of violence to go on in an abusive relationship.



"My friends helped me see that the hurtful things my boyfriend was saying were serious."

1

## Dating violence is more common than you think

People who are being abused often don't talk about it.

- **They might not realize they're being abused.** This is most often true in the early stages when violence is limited to verbal or emotional abuse.
- **They might believe they deserve it.** Being made fun of, criticized or insulted can make people think they've done or said something wrong. This is *not* true. But stopping physical or sexual violence is harder if a person believes the verbal abuse is true.
- **They might come from a violent home.** Violence might seem normal to someone who grew up with it.
- **They may be very attracted to or in love with the abuser.**
- **They may feel embarrassed, ashamed or afraid to tell anyone.**

When violence is a secret, it's harder to stop it.

**The sooner you notice potential dating violence, the easier it is to get help.**

2

## Are you in an abusive relationship?

### What to watch for

It's not always easy to see that someone is likely to be violent. But, if you know what to watch for, you can often pick up hints *before* abuse gets physical.

#### A person is more likely to become violent who:

- Seems jealous when you talk to or spend time with other friends.
- Gets angry over small things.
- Throws or breaks things when angry.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.

#### The person may also:

- Want to control how you dress or where you go.
- Tell you you're wrong, stupid, crazy or inadequate when you disagree.
- Always plan what you'll do together.

### What to do

- **Notice how you feel.** Are you depressed? Do you feel more free to be yourself when your partner isn't around?
- **Notice what you do.** Do you find yourself making excuses for your partner? Do you spend less time with friends and family? Do you change how you act to avoid making your partner angry?
- **Talk to friends.** Often a friend or family member can see things more clearly. Do they see abuse in your relationship?

3

### It can be confusing

If someone were mean and violent all the time, it would be easy to avoid him or her. But sometimes things that suggest a person might become violent are qualities you admire at first.

#### Here are some things to think about. Is this person:

- A take-charge kind of person **OR** Someone who tries to control every detail?
- Loving and attentive? **OR** Demanding and jealous?
- Charming and fun? **OR** Has to always be the center of attention?
- Smart and sophisticated? **OR** Someone who ignores or makes fun of your ideas?

### What about conflict?

It's normal to have conflict in a relationship. Working it out together can bring you closer.

#### When you disagree, does your partner:

- Respect your ideas and views?
- Listen to what you're saying?
- Help find solutions that work for you both?

#### Be careful if your partner:

- Has to have things go his or her way.
- Isn't willing to meet you halfway.
- Insults you or puts you down.

Think hard about whether you want this person in your life.

4