



TEEN DATING VIOLENCE CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use this list of questions as a starting place for discussions with your child on teen dating violence.

1. What makes a relationship healthy?
2. How are things going?
3. What are your friends' dating relationships like?
4. Why do you think one person would hurt the other when they're dating?
5. Why would a person stay in an abusive relationship?
6. Have you seen any kind of abusive behavior between couples you know?
7. What can you do if you have a friend who is threatened—or a friend who is acting violently or aggressively?
8. What kind of messages about dating violence and relationships do you see in the media?
9. Where can you go to find help if you or your friend needs it?
10. [If your teen is dating someone] "How is your relationship going?"



CHECKING FOR SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Use the checklist on this page to determine whether your child is involved in unhealthy relationship behaviors—either doing it to someone else, experiencing it themselves, or both. In the table below, you can use “friend” or “dating partner” depending on your child’s relationship status.

BEHAVIOR	MY CHILD IS DOING THIS	THIS IS HAPPENING TO MY CHILD
Calling a friend/dating partner a bad name		
Making a friend/dating partner feel bad about themselves		
Being jealous of a friend/dating partner or getting angry if they spend time with other people		
Criticizing a friend’s/dating partner’s opinions		
Spreading rumors about a friend/dating partner		
Manipulating a friend/dating partner		
Controlling friends/dating partners, telling them what to do		
Isolating friends/dating partners		
Ignoring friend’s/dating partner’s feelings		
Intimidating a friend/dating partner		
Lying to a friend/dating partner to manipulate them		
Trying to make a friend/dating partner feel guilty		
Threatening to hurt oneself to make a friend/dating partner feel guilty		
Encouraging friends/dating partners to do things they do not feel comfortable doing		
Putting down other people (like other friends or family) in a friend’s/dating partner’s life		
Humiliating friends/dating partners in private or in public		
Unfairly blaming a friend/dating partner		
Physically hurting a friend/dating partner		
Insulting a friend’s/dating partner’s beliefs or values		
Verbally threatening a friend/dating partner		
Getting violent with a friend/dating partner when angry		
Talking disrespectfully or putting down a friend/dating partner		





PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITY: MYTH OR FACT?

This is an activity for you to do with your adolescent that can create opportunities for conversations about teen dating violence. Look through this list with your child and decide together what is myth, and what is fact. Check your answers together and discuss what you find out. Does anything surprise you? Ask your child whether these issues have affected them directly or if they know people who have been affected.



Circle either **MYTH** or **FACT** for each of the following statements:

1. Teen dating violence cannot happen to my child. **MYTH or FACT**
2. Teen dating violence can occur in relationships that are not serious or long-term. **MYTH or FACT**
3. Sexual violence, such as rape, usually happens between two people who do not know each other. **MYTH or FACT**
4. Teenagers rarely experience physical dating violence. **MYTH or FACT**
5. Motor vehicle (car) crashes are the leading cause of death among teens. **MYTH or FACT**
6. Suicide is common among 10- to 14-year-olds. **MYTH or FACT**
7. Cyberbullying is not as much of a problem as in-person bullying. **MYTH or FACT**
8. Sexually transmitted infections and pregnancies really do not occur that frequently among adolescents. **MYTH or FACT**



MYTH OR FACT ANSWER KEY

1. Teen dating violence cannot happen to my child.

This is a MYTH. About 1 in 12 (or 8.5%) of teenagers say they are physically abused by a dating partner each year.¹ It happens to teens from all backgrounds.

2. Teen dating violence can occur in relationships that are not serious or long-term.

This is a FACT. You can still experience dating violence in relationships that are not serious or long-term. 1 in 12 teens report being hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend.²

3. Sexual violence, such as rape, usually happens between two people who do not know each other.

This is a MYTH. Most female and male victims of rape know their perpetrators. More than 2 in 5 female victims of rape reported that at least one perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner. Over half of female victims reported being raped by an acquaintance.³

4. Teenagers rarely experience physical dating violence.

This is a MYTH. 1 in 10 high school girls compared to 1 in 15 high school boys reported experiencing physical dating violence from a dating partner in the past 12 months.⁴

5. Motor vehicle (car) crashes are the leading cause of death among teens.

This is a FACT. About 2,800 teens ages 13-19 died in car crashes in 2020. That is about 8 teens per day.⁵

6. Suicide is common among 10- to 14-year-olds.

This is a FACT. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10- to 14-year-olds.⁶ In 2021, about 13% of high school girls and 7% of boys attempted suicide in the US, while 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys seriously considered suicide.⁷

7. Cyberbullying is not as much of a problem as in-person bullying.

This is a MYTH. More than 1 in 6 teens report that they experienced some form of cyberbullying in the last year. Girls are nearly twice as likely to experience cyberbullying as boys.⁸ Victims of cyberbullying experience higher levels of depression, suicidal thoughts, weapon carrying, and physical fights.⁹

8. Sexually transmitted infections and pregnancies really do not occur that frequently among adolescents.

This is a MYTH. Adolescents ages 15-24 account for nearly half of all new cases of STI's each year.¹⁰ The teen pregnancy rate has steadily declined since the 1990's; 14 out of every 1000 teen girls (15-19) gave birth in 2021.¹¹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data](#). Available at www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on 9/2/2023.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data](#). Available at www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on 9/2/2023.

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data](#). Available at www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on 9/2/2023.

⁵ [Keep Teen Drivers Safe | Features | Injury Center | CDC](#)

⁶ [WISQARS Data Visualization](#) (cdc.gov)

⁷ [Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors Among High School Students](#) — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2021 | MMWR (cdc.gov)

⁸ [Dating Violence, Sexual Violence, and Bullying Victimization Among High School Students](#) — Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2021 | MMWR (cdc.gov)

⁹ [Cyberbullying, Mental Health, and Violence in Adolescents and Associations With Sex and Race: Data From the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#) - Mohammed Alhajji, Sarah Bass, Ting Dai, 2019 (sagepub.com)

¹⁰ [National Overview of STDs](#), 2021 (cdc.gov)

¹¹ [FastStats - Teen Births](#) (cdc.gov)



FOUR-STEP PLAN FOR PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure is a common challenge that many children and teens face. Let's explore a four-step plan you can use to help your child handle peer pressure effectively.

1

IDENTIFY Potential Peer Pressure Situations

This step helps your child plan ahead. You can help your child become aware of potential challenges they may face.

- Sit down with your child and discuss various situations where they might encounter peer pressure.
- Listen attentively to their concerns and help them identify scenarios that might be challenging for them.

2

RECOGNIZE Signs of Potential Problems

The next step is to identify signs that empower your child to be proactive and take control of their decisions.

- Encourage your child to recognize signs of potential problems related to peer pressure, such as feeling uncomfortable or pressured by friends.
- Discuss specific warning signs, like being asked to engage in risky behaviors or being pushed into situations that go against their values.

3

THINK AHEAD and Plan Responses

The third step helps your child think about what they can say when confronted with specific situations involving peer pressure.

- Brainstorm potential responses with your child for each peer pressure scenario they might encounter.
- Encourage them to think about assertive ways to say "no" and alternatives to risky activities.
- Role-play different situations with your child, giving them the opportunity to practice their responses in a safe environment.

4

REINFORCE Self-Confidence

The fourth step is to role-play these situations with your child to reinforce self-confidence.

- Emphasize the importance of self-confidence in handling peer pressure.
- Remind your child that it's okay to be themselves and stand by their values, even if their choices differ from their friends'.
- Offer praise and encouragement when they handle peer pressure situations assertively and independently.



FOUR-STEP PLAN FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

These four steps for resolving conflict should be done with the parent(s) or caregiver(s) and the adolescent.

STEP

1

DEFINE
the issue
or problem

STEP

2

DISCUSS
possible
solutions

STEP

3

CHOOSE
and implement
a solution

STEP

4

EVALUATE
the solution:
check in about
how the plan is
working out.