



## Teen Dating Abuse: The Basics

Austin, TX

Nationally, 1 in 3 teenagers report knowing a friend who has been hit, punched, kicked, slapped, choked or physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend. Whether you know them personally or not, teens at your own school are in unhealthy relationships involving control, physical abuse and other behaviors that can follow them into adulthood as perpetrators or victims of relationship abuse.

Teen dating abuse isn't an argument every once in a while, or a bad mood after a bad day. Dating or relationship abuse is a pattern of controlling and abusive behavior. It can cause injury and even death, and though these are often the stories that make the news, it doesn't have to be physical. It can be verbal and emotional abuse - constant insults, isolation from family and friends, controlling what someone wears, and sexual assault.

Constant texting, phone calls, or embarrassing postings on MySpace or Facebook pages can also be a form of abuse. While communicating online or via text message is normal, it can be used as a way to monitor, control, or even blackmail a girlfriend or boyfriend. A 2007 survey from Teenage Research Unlimited found that 71% of teens regard boyfriends/girlfriends spreading rumors about them on cell phones and social networking sites as a serious problem. Another 68% of teens say boyfriends/girlfriends sharing private or embarrassing pictures/videos on cell phones and computers is also a serious concern.

In its first year of operation, loveisrespect, National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline has already seen a steady stream of calls and chats from both teens and parents. Visitors to the [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) website continue to grow as word gets out about their special brand of advocacy, "peer advocacy". Peer advocates, between the ages of 16-24, offer support and referrals through the 24/7 telephone helpline and a live chat, between the hours of 4pm CST – 2 am.

These are some questions that can help you decide if your relationship is healthy or not. If you answer yes to even one of these questions, consider talking to a peer advocate by calling 1-866-331-9474 (1-866-331-8453 TTY) or chatting live at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).

Does your boyfriend/girlfriend:  
Look at you or act in ways that scare you?  
Act jealous or possessive?  
Put you down or criticize you?  
Try to control where you go, what you wear or what you do?  
Text or IM you excessively?  
Blame you for "making" them treat you badly?  
Threaten to kill or hurt you or themselves if you leave them?  
Try to stop you from seeing or talking to friends and family?  
Try to force or guilt you into sexual activity?