



23%

**of you have
dated a guy
who has made
you feel afraid.**

SOURCE: A 2008 SEVENTEEN/LIZ CLAIBORNE INC.
SURVEY ON SEVENTEEN.COM

**"FOR THREE YEARS,
MY BOYFRIEND HIT ME,
CALLED ME NAMES,
AND MADE ME
FEEL WORTHLESS."**

-LAURA*, 19, POINT PLEASANT, NJ

Date-related abuse on rise for adolescent girls

seventeen
BUZZ

Love Hurts?

“I’d known my ex for years: He had such a big heart, and he was the one who got me through a bad breakup before we started dating,” says Ashley*, 18, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. “He’d tell me I was beautiful and deserved better.” That’s why Ashley was, as she says, “in denial” when her ex started beating her—several times a week. “He’d punch me in the head so hard, I’d black out. He forced me to hook up with him, then make fun of my body. Finally, when he held a knife to my throat—to ‘teach me a lesson’—that was the last straw.”

Ashley is not alone: *One out of four girls* reports being abused in a relationship. That’s more girls than ever. For some girls, just recognizing they’re in an abusive relationship is the hard part. “At first, it started as him just ‘being protective,’” says Becca*, 18, of Beardstown, Illinois, about her ex. “Then it progressed to him freaking out if a guy texted me; before long, he would yell at me and call me horrible names. After every time, he’d say it wouldn’t happen again. But it always did. And each time was worse.”

When you're falling in love, your guy can seem perfect. But with more girls than ever being victims of dating abuse, it's important to recognize the warning signs—before you get hurt.

BY JESSICA PRESS

Other girls know something is wrong, but they stay in their relationships because they feel trapped or helpless: “I was stuck in an abusive relationship for almost *three years*,” says Julia*, 20, of Fresno, California. “He had complete mental control over me: He told me I was a slut for wearing makeup and dressing cute, then he’d pressure me to have sex.” The fear and helplessness that come with dating abuse are what can make it so hard to overcome—because it can start dramatically or gradually; and it can be confusing to accept that a relationship that once felt amazing could turn dangerous. But there is a way out of the vicious cycle of confusion and pain: It’s *knowing* what abuse is, *recognizing* the signs of it, and *getting help*—for you, or a friend. ➡

*Name has been changed.

"MY FIRST LOVE ABUSED ME"

Morgan, 15, never expected a mean streak to turn dangerous.

taking a stand
Morgan is stronger now—and won't settle or change for any guy.

“W

hen Andy* and I got together last February, I felt amazing. I loved how he'd go out of his way for me, and how he'd talk about our

future. When we were together, it felt like we were in our own little world. For the first time, I was falling in love.

But as we got closer, Andy's sarcastic streak came out—he'd send mean texts to my friends from *my* phone, then laugh them off. He became jealous, especially of my best friend, Nate*: If I didn't answer my phone, Andy would accuse me of cheating with Nate. On Valentine's Day, he was furious that I gave Nate an 88¢ pack of M&M's—even though I'd spent more than \$25 on *him*!

The angrier Andy got, the harder I tried to make things better. It was frustrating, but I thought it was worth it for my first love. I even lost my virginity to Andy, because I thought it would *prove* how much he meant to me. But all it did was trap me: I'd given him something so personal, I felt like I *had* to make things work.

THE DARK SIDE

Two months into dating, I started feeling like things were really 'off.' I was always worrying that Andy would get jealous and then mad or mean, so I'd delete texts and pictures that might set him off. Then it happened: A bunch of us were sitting at a track meet, and I took a sip of Nate's water; Andy must have thought I was flirting, because he said my name—and when I turned around, he slapped me on the side of my face. I was stunned and embarrassed, and hoped my friends didn't notice. But Andy didn't apologize; he told me he was kidding, and that I was being a baby and should just 'suck it up.' I was so *confused*, I stopped talking to him for a few days.

Later in the week, Andy started 'joking' to his friends about how 'hilarious' it was that he'd hit me; to show his friends what happened, he called my name, and hit me *again*. This time, he did it with his fist, and I ended up with a fat lip. Again, he claimed that he was just being funny; I felt ashamed and weird, but I lied to myself that he was right and it really *wasn't* a big deal.

REALITY CHECK

A few weeks later, we were walking home from a friend's. It was soon after we'd had sex that first (and only) time, and I told him there was a chance I was pregnant. Andy leaned into me as if to hug me—then pulled his arm back, made a fist, and swung his hand into my stomach. 'If there was anything in there, it's dead now,' he whispered. I gasped and bent over, and felt like I would throw up.

I wouldn't speak to Andy after that, and he broke up with me; he probably thought it was easier to dump me instead of facing up to what he'd done. But even after *that*, I tried to get him back—I just wanted to go back to those amazing moments we'd had when we first got together.

Then last summer, I finally told my guy friends the extent of what happened, and they said they were going to beat up Andy. His parents found out and accused us of threatening Andy; my dad got a lawyer involved. Andy said if I pressed charges, he'd deny hitting me, and make me claim that I'd 'raped' him. At that moment, I saw how cruel he could be. It was then that I *finally* woke up and decided I wanted nothing to do with him.

I know that I don't have to be the person I was with Andy. I don't have to take blame for things or put up with getting hit. Now if some guy likes me for who I am, that's great—but if he doesn't, I'll find someone who does. I'm not going to change for anyone. I'm stronger now."

*Name has been changed.

"HE LEANED IN TO HUG ME, THEN MADE A FIST AND SWUNG."

GET HELP

If you or a friend is dealing with dating abuse (or you're not really sure if what you're experiencing is abuse), call or visit loveisrespect.org or the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline for 24/7 anonymous support.

• **call the hotline** Dial 866-331-9474 to be connected to a trained advocate who can help you; from 4 P.M. to 2 A.M. CST, calls are answered by trained 16- to 24-year-olds.

• **log on** At loveisrespect.org, you can live-chat (IM style); from 4 P.M. to 2 A.M. CST, you'll reach trained peer advocates.

70%

of you say you wouldn't break up with an abusive boyfriend if you loved him.

SOURCE: A 2008 SURVEY BY LOVE IS RESPECT INC. VISIT LOVEISRESPECT.ORG

CELEBS TAKE A STAND

These stars are doing
their part to end dating abuse:



Lauren Conrad

"I've had friends who have been with guys who alienate them from other people. It's happened to me. In relationships, when you get

in too deep, it's harder to see the bigger picture."

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Buy Lauren's Have a Heart necklace (right); net proceeds go to the Girls M.powerment Campaign to end abuse ([Mark, \\$22, avon.com](http://Mark_S22.avon.com)).



Leighton Meester

"As a woman, I feel it's my responsibility to talk about domestic violence; as long as there's awareness, there can be prevention."

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Go to saynotoviolence.org and join more

than five million people who have taken a stand against abuse; type in your name and e-mail address, and you'll automatically get news and info on how you can stop the violence.



Jennifer Hudson

After the tragic murders of her mom, brother, and nephew last fall, Jennifer created the Hudson-King Foundation. "The specific purpose of the Foundation is to care for . . . families

who have lost relatives to a violent crime," her family has said.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Find out more at seventeen.com/dateabuse.

52%

of you have dated a guy who's pressured you into doing sexual things you weren't ready to do.

SOURCE: A 2008 JEWELRY & CLASPER INC. SURVEY ON SEVENTEEN.COM

RED FLAGS

Dating abuse may not always be black-and-white. But if your guy does any of these things, it could be a sign of danger:

- ❑ He gets angry when guys give you attention (like talk to or text you), or when you want to do things without him.
- ❑ He puts you down or insults you; he calls you names, curses you out, or mocks what you say, do, or like.
- ❑ He says it's your fault when he says hurtful things to you.
- ❑ He tries to control where you go, or what you wear or do.
- ❑ He scares you, like by "joking" about killing himself—or hurting you.
- ❑ He texts, calls, or IMs you nonstop.
- ❑ He tries to force you to have sex before you're ready, or puts you down for being "too sexy."
- ❑ He tries to stop you from seeing or talking to your friends or family—he plays up their flaws, or tries to make it seem like they're bad for you or holding you back.
- ❑ He hits, slaps, pushes, or kicks you—even once.

If he does any of these things, get help:

Go to loveisrespect.org.

SOURCES: NATIONAL TEEN DATING ABUSE HELPLINE; LOVEISRESPECT.ORG

ONE GIRL'S MISSION TO HELP

Johanna Orozco, 20, knows the dangers of dating violence: After she ended an abusive two-year relationship, her ex tracked her down and raped her—then two weeks later, he shot her in the face. (He is currently serving a **27-year prison sentence**.) Today, after **eight surgeries**, Johanna is determined to protect other girls: She speaks at high schools around Ohio (where she's from), and spends time at abused-women's shelters, sharing her experience and listening to women's stories. "**Don't be afraid to get help,**" she tells girls and guys. "I was scared to speak out or worry my family, and I thought I could handle things on my own. But I don't want what happened to me to happen to anyone else."

