

## ***Real Talk – A Resource Guide for Educating Teens on Healthy Relationships***

The Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV) and the Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) State Steering Committee of Rhode Island present ***Real Talk – A Resource Guide for Educating Teens on Healthy Relationships***. This tool (*Real Talk*) is a byproduct of “Rhode Island’s Domestic Violence Prevention Plan: Addressing the Violence Before It Starts” that was launched in February 2011. In this plan, we committed to build local and state capacity to engage men and youth in domestic violence prevention efforts in Rhode Island. One year later, we are excited to introduce you to *Real Talk*.

*Real Talk* was designed specifically for adults who work directly with youth, either in a school or community setting. This tool is intended to help youth workers facilitate dialogue about teen dating violence and prepare them as they teach healthy relationship skills to youth. Working with young people to promote healthy relationships and change social norms to prevent teen dating violence can sometimes feel intimidating to youth workers who are already addressing connected issues like gang violence, suicide, teen pregnancy and community organizing. However, the overlap is significant. **23.9%** of RI high school girls who had been hit, slapped or physically hurt on purpose by their girlfriend/boyfriend in the last 12 months had attempted **suicide**, versus **8.1%** of girls who had not experienced dating violence in the past 12 months. When we look at other high risk behaviors like alcohol, marijuana, laxatives use and purging, we find the rates are consistently higher among RI girls who have been abused than among non-abused girls.

- **59.5%** of RI high school girls who had been abused drank **alcohol** at least once in the past 30 days versus **40.8 %** of girls who had not experienced dating violence.
- **36.7%** of RI high school girls who had been abused had used **marijuana** in the last 30 days versus **17%** of girls who had not experienced dating violence.
- **13.3%** of RI high school girls who had been abused had taken **laxatives or purged** to lose weight versus **4.6%** of girls who had not experienced dating violence.

*Real Talk* was developed to help youth workers feel comfortable facilitating sessions on teen dating violence prevention and build their capacity to integrate this topic into the work they are currently doing. Prevention resources are limited in our state, which increases the need for all nonprofit community-based organizations, across disciplines, to work together on preventing teen dating violence.

*Real Talk* includes:

- A Facilitator's Guide on Teen Dating Violence
- A Facilitator's Guide on Healthy Relationships
- Awareness Activity Ideas for Schools and Communities
- Rhode Island and National Resources
- Sample Lesson Plans on Healthy Relationships

Additionally, the RICADV is offering training and technical assistance to youth serving organizations on how to facilitate *Real Talk* in their community. Please contact Lucy Rios, Director of Prevention at the RICADV for more information.

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## *Facilitator's Guide on Teen Dating Violence*

The Cycle of My Life

*By Pamela, age 16*

It all starts out wonderful until he strikes  
Constantly hearing I'm sorry  
Until it doesn't matter anymore  
Forgiving every time, forgetting never  
Calling out for him to stop  
Never stopping until it is almost too late  
Never thinking about the consequences of his actions  
Just making me think out every possible consequence of mine  
Hearing I'm sorry all over again  
Meeting him with open eyes  
Awaiting the gifts I know will pour forward  
Until it all stops-  
And the cycle begins all over again<sup>1</sup>

As Pamela's poem illustrates, teen dating violence is typically not a one-time incident, but rather an established pattern of cyclical abuse that occurs over and over again — and can be very difficult to stop once it has begun. Unfortunately, Pamela's experience is not unique. As many as one-third of teens in the United States experience some form of abuse in their romantic dating relationships, including verbal, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup> A similar survey found that nearly one-third of teens in the United States who have been in a relationship experience the most serious forms of dating violence and abuse including sexual abuse, physical abuse, and threats of physical harm.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, nearly one-half of teens in relationships report being controlled, threatened or pressured to do things they did not want to do.<sup>4</sup> One such teen is Nicole, and her story is sadly representative of a typical abusive relationship: *When I was 15, I went to summer school,*

*and I met this guy. And we became a couple. Slowly, he became controlling and verbally abusive. And then finally, it led to him hitting me. It would be just like a flicking of the head... and then one time it was a hit in the face. And then he was choking me on the stairs. It made me feel very scared and alone and confused.*<sup>5</sup>

Most teens who experience dating violence feel scared, alone and confused. Although they may certainly be scared and confused, they are — statistically speaking — far from alone. Fifty-seven percent of teens know someone who has been verbally, physically or sexually abusive in a dating relationship.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, females aged 16 to 24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other age group.<sup>7</sup> However, a recent survey found that one-fourth of tweens (aged 11 to 14) say that boyfriend/girlfriend relationships usually begin at age 14 and younger, and both parents and tweens report that sex is

considered a typical part of tween dating relationships.<sup>8</sup> Data now reveals that early sexual activity is an indicator for dating violence and abuse among teenagers.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, teen dating violence may soon also become prevalent among female tweens.<sup>10</sup> Finally, no teen is exempt: teen dating violence can affect any adolescent, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, culture or economic status.

### Teen Dating Violence: What is it?

The patterns and signs of teen dating violence tend to mirror those exhibited in adult abusive relationships.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, there is often a pattern of repeated violence that escalates over time, a pattern of abusive behavior followed by apologies and promises to change, and an increased risk of violence when the abused partner decides to leave the relationship.<sup>12</sup> Also, abusive boys, like men, tend to isolate their partner from friends and family, equate possessiveness and jealousy with love, and use their social status to establish control over their partner.<sup>13</sup>

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence defines teen dating violence as: a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, verbal and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent against a current or former dating partner. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behavior — either in a same-sex or opposite-sex dating relationship — in order to gain power and maintain control over the dating partner.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), teen dating violence is defined as the physical, sexual or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship, as well as stalking. It can occur in person or

electronically and may occur to a current or former dating partner. (cdc.gov)  
The three main types of dating abuse — verbal or emotional, physical and sexual — are more fully explored below.

### Verbal or Emotional Dating Abuse

*What hurt me the most were his mean words. I wasn't used to the kind of names he called me... I cried a lot. I walked looking down. I'd ditch school a lot, and, although I made sure I passed, I was falling behind. I was miserable.<sup>15</sup>*

Verbal or emotional abuse involves someone saying or doing something to their dating partner that causes the person to feel afraid and/or develop a reduced sense of self-esteem or self-worth. Verbal or emotional abuse involves one person trying to control their partner's feelings or behaviors. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Name-calling and put-downs
- Yelling and screaming
- Embarrassing the person in front of others
- Intimidation
- Spreading negative rumors about the person
- Preventing the person from seeing their friends or family
- Threatening violence or harm
- Telling the person what to do
- Making racial slurs about the person
- Making the person feel responsible for the abuse/violence

A high percentage of high school students surveyed — 61 percent — reported having had a partner who made them feel bad or embarrassed about themselves.<sup>16</sup>

### Physical Dating Abuse

*...He had to make sure I wasn't doing anything. He'd find out from his friends if I was talking to someone, and we'd get in a big argument ... He'd hit me, push me, sock me in the stomach and in the head. He was smart. He knew not to leave me with bruises that showed.<sup>17</sup>*

Physical abuse involves any intentional unwanted contact with the other person's body. Physical abuse does not have to leave a mark. Physical abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Scratching
- Kicking
- Pushing
- Choking
- Biting
- Slapping
- Shoving
- Pulling hair
- Punching
- Pinching

Forty-five percent of girls surveyed reported they had encountered some form of physical aggression during the course of dating.<sup>18</sup> In another survey, girls reported they were victims of physical violence significantly more often while their male partners were making sexual advances. This suggests that a large percentage of girls are being physically abused when they refuse unwanted sexual advances.<sup>19</sup>

### Sexual Dating Abuse

*It began gradually. He'd yell at her, accuse her of flirting with other guys and harp on the shortness of her cheerleading skirt. Then he started punching her, kicking her and pulling her hair ... Sometimes, he'd force her to have sex.<sup>20</sup>*

Sexual abuse involves any sexual behavior

that is unwanted or interferes with the other person's right to say "no" to sexual advances. Examples of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted kissing or touching
- Forcing someone to go further sexually than they want to
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity
- Date rape
- Not letting someone use birth control
- Not letting someone use protection against sexually transmitted diseases

An alarming 76 percent of female high school students surveyed reported that they had experienced one or more incidents of unwanted sexual activity, including unwanted kissing, hugging, groping and/or sexual intercourse.<sup>21</sup>

### Technology: A New Form of Abuse

*My boyfriend terrorized me in a number of ways, but one of the most effective was through email. Email became one of his primary methods of control ... He wanted to know where I was every second of every day.<sup>22</sup>*

As teenagers' use of technological devices such as cell phones and computers becomes more common, new research is proving that this technology is being used by adolescents to abuse and/or control partners in dating relationships. This research has provided the first clear evidence that technology has made teen dating violence more pervasive.<sup>23</sup>

In a survey of teens ages 13 to 18, results showed that alarming numbers of teens are being controlled, abused and threatened via cell phone and computer

use, including the use of email, text messages, instant messages, phone, and community networks such as web chats, social sites and blogs:<sup>24</sup>

- Thirty percent of teens say they've been text messaged up to 30 times an hour by a partner trying to find out where they are, what they are doing or who they are with.
- Twenty-five percent of teens say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner via cell phone and text messaging.
- Twenty-two percent of teens have been asked to engage in sex via cell phone or the internet when they do not want to.
- Nineteen percent of teens say that their partner has used a cell phone or the internet to spread rumors about them.
- Eleven percent of teens report that a partner has shared private or embarrassing photos or videos of them.
- Ten percent of teens claim they have been threatened physically via email, instant message, text or chat room.<sup>25</sup>

New research has also found that an alarming number of tweens are also affected by technological dating violence. A survey funded by Liz Claiborne, Inc. and the National Teen Dating Violence Abuse Helpline found that two-fifths of tweens know friends who have been verbally abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend – called names, put down or insulted – via cell phone, instant messenger and social networking sites such as Facebook.<sup>26</sup> The use of these technological devices to control and abuse dating partners intensifies the relentlessness of abuse, as abusers can have access to their dating partner 24 hours a day, even when they are not physically together.

### **A Three-Stage Cyclical Pattern of Abuse**

Teen dating violence, like adult domestic violence, has a distinct pattern of abuse comprising three stages repeated over and over again: tension building, explosion and honeymoon. During the tension building stage the couple may argue a lot. Abusers may yell for no reason and make false accusations against their partners. The targets of abuse may feel like they can't do anything right. In general, the atmosphere between the couple is tense and the tension builds with each interaction.<sup>27</sup>

During the explosion stage this accumulation of tension is released in a burst of verbal, emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse. Abusers may scream in a frightening, threatening or humiliating way. They may throw things at their partners, slap, kick or punch them. They may grab their partners in a sexually aggressive manner and/or rape them.<sup>28</sup>

After the release of the pent-up tensions, the honeymoon stage begins. During this stage, abusers apologize profusely and promise to never be abusive again. They may then purchase flowers or other gifts for the abused partner. Sometimes, abusers will shift the blame onto their partners and accuse them of causing the explosive and abusive behavior. At other times, abusers may blame the abuse on drugs or alcohol. Over time, the honeymoon period may get shorter and shorter between bouts of abusive explosions. In severely abusive relationships, the explosion stage becomes more and more violent and dangerous, and the honeymoon stage may disappear altogether.<sup>29</sup>

## **Factors Influencing Teen Dating Violence**

### **Inability to Recognize a Healthy versus an Unhealthy Relationship**

Dating and intimate relationships are a normal part of growing up for many adolescents. Yet teenagers frequently form their first romantic relationship without a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy versus an unhealthy relationship. For example, when Dr. Elizabeth Miller, an expert on teen dating violence, administered a survey to a class of middle-school students, 100 percent of them responded that jealousy and possessiveness are part of true love.<sup>30</sup> Seventy-one percent of 200 Boston teens surveyed said that arguing is a normal part of a relationship.<sup>31</sup> With little or no formal education regarding what constitutes a healthy versus an unhealthy relationship, teens tend to rely on what they have learned from their family, peers and the mass media. Rather than being helpful and clarifying, these informal modes of education can actually hinder the understanding and development of healthy dating relationships. As a result, teens are particularly vulnerable to becoming targets of dating abuse.<sup>32</sup>

### **Family Influences**

The gender socialization of boys and girls is rooted in childrearing practices. By the age of 2 or 3, children are already imitating the behaviors of their family members, particularly those of the same gender.<sup>33</sup> Young boys who grow up observing their fathers or other male family members being violent toward women, treating them as inferior or as objects for their sexual pleasure, may grow up to believe these attitudes and behaviors are normal.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, studies show that girls who grow up witnessing their mothers or

other female family members being abused or treated in an inferior manner will grow up learning to accept violence from their future dating and intimate partners and will not necessarily consider the behavior abusive.<sup>35</sup>

For example, a study conducted in June 2009 found that the international economic crash had a strong link to levels of teen dating violence among the families hardest hit in the United States. Almost one-half of teens who reported that their families suffered from financial problems said that they witnessed some form of violent or abusive behavior between their parents.<sup>36</sup> Sixty-seven percent of these same teens reported experiencing some form of dating violence and abuse in their own relationships – a rate of abuse 50 percent higher than for teens who did not witness abuse between their parents.<sup>37</sup>

### **Peer Influence**

As teenage boys are more concerned with what their male peers think and do than with what their female peers think or do, they tend to look to their male peers as models for shaping their own behaviors.<sup>38</sup> If adolescent boys have male peers who advise them to verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abuse their dating partners, they are likely to seriously consider this advice. Likewise, if they have peers who are abusive to their dating partners, they are more likely to be abusive in their own dating relationships.<sup>39</sup> Several studies have shown that male teens who hold sexist attitudes that support male domination over females are more likely to associate with other male peers who hold these same views.<sup>40</sup>

### **Mass Media Influence**

Although arguably not as influential as

family or peers, the mass media also contributes to teens' understanding of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. For example, the mass media readily characterizes subtle abusive relationship behaviors, such as possessiveness and jealousy, as romantic acts of love and devotion.<sup>41</sup> In addition, youth are bombarded by mass media images depicting men solving their problems through violent means. Moreover, this aggressive, physical and often misogynistic conduct is admired as heroic masculinity.<sup>42</sup> As a result, it is not surprising that boys (and girls) would incorporate violence into their definition of manhood.<sup>43</sup>

### **Teen Dating Violence in Same-Sex Relationships**

Nearly 25 percent of teens in same-sex relationships report some type of dating abuse.<sup>44</sup> This statistic is comparable to the percentage of teens that experience dating abuse in opposite-sex relationships. As in opposite-sex relationships, dating violence in same-sex relationships is a systematic pattern of behavior in which one teen tries, through verbal, physical and/or sexual means, to control the thoughts, beliefs and/or conduct of their dating partner. Although teens in same-sex relationships share similar dating experiences with their peers in opposite-sex relationships, there are major important differences between the two groups.

In heterosexist and homophobic societies, many lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered teens live in the proverbial closet, afraid to disclose their sexual orientation. As a result, an abusive dating partner may use their boyfriend or girlfriend's sexual orientation as a tool of control. The abuser may threaten to tell

family, friends or teachers about their partner's sexual orientation. The consequences of this information becoming public could very likely result in a loss of friends, not to mention intimidation, harassment or physical violence from peers. In addition, these teens risk being thrown out of their houses, disowned or even institutionalized by their parents.<sup>45</sup>

Given the possibility of these dire consequences, simply the threat of their sexual orientation being disclosed is enough to frighten teens into remaining in abusive relationships and deter them from seeking support or talking to a friend. Myths about gender equality also serve as an additional barrier for teens in same-sex abusive dating relationships. The myth that issues of power and control don't exist in same-sex relationships because both partners are the same gender and therefore equal covers up the reality that teen dating violence not only occurs in same-sex relationships, but does so at roughly the same rate as in opposite-sex teen relationships.<sup>46</sup>

### **Consequences of Teen Dating Violence**

The consequences of teen dating violence create myriad health-related issues for teens. A sense of disempowerment and personal hopelessness that often results from being on the receiving end of an abusive relationship can lead to self-harming coping strategies, such as substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behaviors and suicide.<sup>47</sup> Statistical data reflecting these health issues are sobering:

- Girls who reported having been sexually or physically abused in a dating relationship were more than twice as likely as non-abused girls



to report smoking, drinking and using illegal drugs.<sup>48</sup>

- Girls who reported having been sexually or physically abused in a dating relationship were nearly three times as likely as non-abused girls to report binge eating and purging.<sup>49</sup>
- Girls who were recent targets of dating violence were 61 percent more likely to attempt suicide.<sup>50</sup>

In addition, girls who have been abused in a dating relationship are more likely to experience and/or engage in sexually risky behavior, thus increasing their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as unwanted pregnancy.<sup>51</sup> Girls in abusive relationships are less likely to use condoms consistently, and/or negotiate condom use, for fear of being abused if they insist that their partner use a condom.<sup>52</sup> This, of course, leads to the increased likelihood of unwanted pregnancy. Girls who experience teen dating violence are twice as likely as other girls to report having been pregnant.<sup>53</sup>

Although there is not a conclusive correlation between teen dating violence and teen pregnancy, one study did show that 26 percent of pregnant teens reported having been physically abused by their boyfriends, while 50 percent of these girls stated that the abuse began or was intensified once the pregnancy was disclosed.<sup>54</sup> Already in a vulnerable position as a pregnant teen suffering from peer disapproval, isolation and self-shame, pregnant teens are even more likely to stay in an abusive relationship for fear they will be completely alone if they leave. The stress of a teen pregnancy, coupled with feelings of confusion and shame, contribute to an atmosphere conducive to

violence and control.<sup>55</sup> Sometimes the issue of control is taken to such extremes that abusers will actively try to impregnate their partners. Twenty-six percent of girls with a history of dating abuse reported that their partners actively tried to get them pregnant by manipulating condom use, sabotaging birth control use or making explicit statements about wanting them to become pregnant.<sup>56</sup>

According to Futures Without Violence, sexual and reproductive coercion is abusive behavior that interferes with a person's ability to control his/her reproductive life such as:

- intentionally exposing a partner to sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- attempting to impregnate a woman against her will
- intentionally interfering with the couple's birth control
- threatening or acting violently if a partner does not comply with the perpetrator's wishes regarding contraception or the decision whether to terminate or continue a pregnancy

Needless to say, the health consequences of teen dating violence are not to be taken lightly. The effects of teen dating violence can result in detrimental consequences to a young woman's health that can last a lifetime, including: depression, substance abuse, anti-social behaviors, suicidal thoughts and/or actions, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorder, anxiety and low self-esteem.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the depression, anxiety and low self-esteem caused by teen dating violence creates its own set of harmful consequences, such as:

- dramatic changes in weight and/or appearance

- extreme mood swings
- fear of expressing one's own thoughts or feelings
- becoming quieter than usual and/or withdrawn
- dropping out of extra-curricular school activities
- failing grades
- excessive worry about how a partner will react
- unusual nervousness

### Seeking Help and Ending an Abusive Relationship

Nearly 80 percent of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abusers.<sup>58</sup> Ending a relationship is a difficult and involved process, even in a healthy relationship. In a physically abusive relationship, it can sometimes seem unmanageable, for violence doesn't usually happen in a vacuum. It occurs after a history of verbal and emotional abuse that has chipped away at the victim's self-esteem, making it more difficult to summon the courage to tell someone about the abuse, let alone end the relationship.<sup>59</sup> The following passage from a girl who eventually did manage to leave her abusive relationship demonstrates how difficult it can be:

*It was like a honeymoon when we started dating for the first couple of months. It just started off with this mental abuse. It was verbal abuse. And then I remember the very first time that he actually physically hit me. The hard part for me was not the fact that he hit me, but the fact that he made me feel like I was nothing... It was a giant secret. I didn't even tell any of my lesser friends or my best friend or my mother. I couldn't tell a soul... I felt that it was my fault and that everything was the result of*

*me being not worthy.*<sup>60</sup>

One survey found that 33 percent of teens who had been in an abusive relationship never told anyone about the abuse.<sup>61</sup> When determining whether or not to seek help and/or end an abusive dating relationship, teens have unique obstacles they must face, including peer pressure and age-related factors.

The peer pressure to have a girlfriend or boyfriend can make it difficult for a teen to seek help, let alone end the abusive relationship — for sometimes a teen may feel it is better to have an abusive relationship than no relationship at all.<sup>62</sup> When they do imagine disclosing their abusive relationship to their peers, teens often worry that their friends will take the side of the abuser. And even if their friends do side with them, teens may still worry about losing respect and social status among their peers.<sup>63</sup>

The age-related obstacles teens face when determining whether or not to seek help and/or end an abusive dating relationship often involve a general distrust of adults in positions of authority. A survey found that 80 percent of teens who had been in an abusive relationship turned to a friend for help, not their parents or an authority figure.<sup>64</sup> They may have had experiences of not being believed by an adult or of having adults minimize or not take seriously their experiences. In addition, they may not want their parent(s) to know, for fear of losing their freedom of choice and autonomy, and/or that their parent(s) will force them to end the relationship.<sup>65</sup> Parent-teen relationships go two ways, however. Whether their teens are in an abusive dating situation or not, most parents are not educating their children about the issue. Less than one-third of

surveyed teens had talked to their parents about dating abuse in the past year, whereas more than six out of ten teens had a conversation with a parent in the past year about drugs, alcohol and/or sex.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, though 82 percent of parents feel confident that they could recognize if their teen was experiencing dating violence, more than half of these parents could not correctly identify the warning signs of abuse.<sup>67</sup>

On top of these peer-based and age-related obstacles, the dynamics and patterns of relationship abuse itself function in ways that hinder an abused partner from seeking help. For instance, early in a new relationship, controlling behaviors and excessive jealousy may be interpreted as a sign of commitment and love. As the relationship progresses and the level of control and jealousy increases, rather than recognize the behaviors as unhealthy and abusive, the targets of abuse may simply re-adjust their baseline of what they consider normal or acceptable behavior within a relationship. As the baseline shifts, it can become harder and harder for the target of abuse to recognize the behaviors as abusive, let alone seek help or end the relationship.<sup>68</sup>

### **Teen Reactions to Teen Dating Violence**

In March 2009, an incident of celebrity teen dating violence became heavily publicized. The pop singer Chris Brown, 19, faced two felony charges for beating his girlfriend, the pop singer Rihanna, 21. Court documents revealed that Chris Brown punched, bit and choked Rihanna after she read a text message he had received from another female.<sup>69</sup> Her injuries required hospital treatment and pictures of her bloodied and bruised face circulated TV, websites and newspapers.

The highly publicized event gave teens around the world a chance to talk about teen dating violence. They vocalized their opinions on blogs and other social networking sites. Many of the teenage reactions, however, were disturbing.

A survey of 200 teenagers administered by the Boston Public Health Commission found that 46 percent of participants believed Rihanna was responsible for her abuse and 52 percent said that both Rihanna and Chris Brown bore responsibility.<sup>70</sup> A junior at Lake Forest High School in Chicago said that a common reaction to the incident among his peers, both male and female, was that Rihanna must have done something to provoke the violence.<sup>71</sup> These reactions demonstrate what Harvard Professor Marcyliena Morgan believes are learned behaviors of a patriarchal culture that teaches us to sympathize with, rather than blame and destroy, boys.<sup>72</sup> These reactions clearly demonstrate the need for, and importance of, teen dating violence education.

### **What is Rhode Island Doing to Prevent Teen Dating Violence?**

#### *School Based Efforts*

Rhode Island was the first state in the country to pass teen dating violence prevention legislation, thanks to the leadership of former Attorney General Patrick Lynch and Ann Burke of the Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund. **The Lindsay Ann Burke Law** [R.I.G.L. 16-21-30, 16-85] requires that all Rhode Island public middle and high schools:

- **Establish a Teen Dating Violence Policy**

Each school district shall establish a specific policy to address incidents of dating violence involving students at school, and each school district shall verify compliance with the Department of Education on an annual basis through the Annual School Health Report.

▪ **Incorporate Dating Violence Education into Annual Health Curriculum**

Each school district shall incorporate dating violence education that is age-appropriate into the annual health curriculum framework for students in grades seven through 12.

▪ **Provide Teen Dating Violence Training to All School Staff**

Each school district shall provide dating violence training to all administrators, teachers, nurses and mental health staff at the middle and high school levels. Upon the recommendation of the administrator, other staff may be included or may attend the training on a volunteer basis. The dating violence training shall include, but not be limited to, basic principles of dating violence, warnings signs of dating violence and the school district's dating violence policy, to ensure that they are able to appropriately respond to incidents of dating violence at school. Thereafter, this training shall be provided yearly to all newly hired staff deemed appropriate to receive the training by the school's administration.

The passage of the Lindsay Ann Burke Law has served as a model for many other

states to enact similar legislation. Implementation of the law has varied from district to district. However, we are pleased to report that it is making an impact.

In 2010, the RICADV compiled presentation data from its six member agencies, Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund, Day One, and the Katie Brown Educational Program. In 2010,

- 22 middle schools worked with at least one of these organizations to provide staff training on teen dating violence
- 20 high schools worked with at least one of these organizations to provide staff training on teen dating violence
- 31 middle schools worked with at least one of these organizations to provide youth education on teen dating violence
- 38 high schools worked with at least one of these organizations to provide youth education on teen dating violence.

The RICADV's six member agencies provided 822.5 hours of prevention education to RI youth totaling in 737 presentations reaching 16,507 youth. Advocates conducted 374 classroom presentations in elementary schools, 200 classroom presentations in middle schools and 163 presentations in RI high schools. In addition to school-based education, advocates also worked with afterschool programs and community centers, offering 61 presentations to 716 Youth, 19 presentations to 504 school administrators and educators and 31 presentations to 1,890 parents through parent-run organizations and community-based workshops. Topics ranged from bullying, conflict resolution,

media literacy, communication, teen dating violence and healthy relationships.

### ***Community Based Efforts***

In 2003, the RICADV received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to focus specifically on primary prevention of domestic violence in Rhode Island communities. The purpose of this funding, **the DELTA Program**, is to prevent first-time perpetration and first-time victimization of domestic violence by building local and state prevention capacity.

The RICADV funded four of its member agencies to develop community coordinated response teams (CCRs) in the cities of Cranston, Newport, Pawtucket and Providence. Each CCR initiated primary prevention activities in their communities **to prevent the violence before it starts**. These communities have conducted community needs assessments and have identified evidence-informed prevention strategies that they believe will ameliorate the most relevant risk and protective factors in their communities. They have built partnerships with community service agencies and organizations and have engaged them in prevention efforts. Here's a snapshot of what is happening:

- *Cranston United Against Violence and Abuse (CUAVA)*: This CCR is implementing a modified version of the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program at the Cranston Teen Center through a collaboration with the Johnson and Wales University Gender Equity Center, the Teen Center, the Cranston

Substance Abuse Task Force, and the Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center (EBCC). For more information on Mentors in Violence Prevention visit [www.sportinsociety.org/mvp](http://www.sportinsociety.org/mvp) and contact EBCC at 401.738.9700

- *Newport COVE (Community Overcoming Violence)*: This CCR is implementing Students Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) with support from the Women's Resource Center. SADA has incorporated positive youth development theory and prevention principles into the SADA model while promoting youth leadership and activism. For example, SADA organizes an annual *Beyond Beats and Rhymes Basketball Tournament* which includes an educational forum for all players followed by a community cookout and basketball tournament. For more information on SADA visit [www.facebook.com/NewportSADA](http://www.facebook.com/NewportSADA) or contact the Women's Resource Center at 401.846.5263
- *Woodlawn Community Partnership Team*: This CCR is implementing a number of community-focused prevention activities through collaboration with many partners including the Woodlawn Community Center, Galego Court Housing Development, and the City of Pawtucket Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force. In addition to offering prevention workshops to Pawtucket youth, they host an annual Block Party where the community comes together to speak out against violence and to promote peace in the Woodlawn

community. Local artists perform, and games and food are made available for community members. For more information visit [www.bvadvocacycenter.org](http://www.bvadvocacycenter.org) or contact the Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center at 401.723.3057

- *Providence DELTA*: This CCR is conducting a *Train the Trainer Program* for male facilitators on using a modified version of *Young Men's Work* developed by Paul Kivel. *Young Men's Work* is a curriculum that provides young men with communication, problem solving and healthy relationships skills while supporting them as they closely examine gender norms, the intersections of oppressions, and the roots of male violence. For more information visit [www.womenscenterri.org](http://www.womenscenterri.org) or contact the Women's Center of Rhode Island at 401.861.2761

In addition to local prevention efforts in these communities, the RICADV formed the **DELTA Statewide Steering Committee** to develop a strategic plan for domestic violence primary prevention. The statewide plan, *Addressing the Violence Before It Starts*, was released in early 2011 and it invites all Rhode Islanders to get involved in preventing domestic violence by focusing on three priority areas: engaging men and youth in prevention and building state capacity through training and technical assistance. For more information about the DELTA SSC and to download copies of the prevention plan visit [www.ricadv.org](http://www.ricadv.org) or contact the RICADV at 401.467.9940

Rhode Island is also one of the 11 states receiving *Start Strong* funding, a national

program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in collaboration with Futures Without Violence. This initiative specifically targets 11- to- 14-year-olds and rallies entire communities to promote healthy relationships as the way to prevent teen dating violence and abuse.

**Start Strong Rhode Island** is a collaboration led by Sojourner House, Young Voices and the RI Department of Education. There are several aspects of Start Strong Rhode Island initiatives that include:

- Implementing the *Fourth R* in middle schools
- Coordinating Youth Policy and Education Corps: A group of 15-18 youth who empower their peers to reduce teen dating violence through a curriculum that promotes action through policy change
- Combining new media and grassroots organizing to help young people learn how to choose and keep healthy relationships. For example, Start Strong RI has developed *Healthy Teens*, the world's first immersive virtual reality game, to help teachers teach and students learn about healthy relationships. They also have a social networking site, [www.hkupwithrespect.com](http://www.hkupwithrespect.com), and a video project that helps teens decide what's cool and what's not in relationships.
- *Passport 2 Social Media*, which are community based workshops where adults learn the tools to help their kids choose healthy relationships in the digital world [www.p2sm.org](http://www.p2sm.org)

For more information about Start Strong RI please visit [www.sojournerri.org](http://www.sojournerri.org) or contact Sojourner House at 401.861.6191

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## *Healthy Relationships Facilitator's Guide*

### **Defining Healthy Relationships**

A healthy relationship *is based on equality, mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and commitment.* Problems or conflicts are addressed openly and honestly. Neither tries to "outdo" the other and both work to find a solution acceptable to each person.

### **The Importance of Teaching Healthy Relationships**

Adolescence is a critical time in learning about and exploring relationships. All too often, relationships are perceived as being negative as teens are faced with increasing levels of violence in their homes, in their schools and on the street. As such, it is important to provide them with the ability to identify and define the qualities of a healthy relationship with friends as well as with dating partners.

This information can be especially helpful for those students who have witnessed or experienced violence between their parents or have been in an abusive dating relationship. Helping students to understand that violence is a learned behavior reinforces that it can be unlearned through education and practice. Discussing the components of healthy relationships as a separate unit offers hope and promise, as students come to learn they do not have to accept or repeat abusive behaviors in current and future relationships.

### **In the Best Relationships**

Most students can easily recognize and describe relationships involving physical abuse. However, it can be very challenging - particularly when so few positive role models exist - to identify the components

of a healthy relationship. Several components necessary to build and maintain these relationships include equality, open communication, and respect for boundaries.

**Equality** means that both people have the same rights and privileges in the relationship. Each respects, trusts and believes the other. Neither person sets rules for the relationship or for the other person. Decisions are made together and responsibilities are shared. While each may have different interests, abilities and goals, neither person considers themselves superior. Instead, these differences are appreciated and are seen as a valued part of the relationship.

**Open Communication** is when each person feels safe bringing up concerns and knows that these concerns will not be minimized or ridiculed by the other person. Both people accept that conflict within the relationship is normal and will work through issues as they arise. Neither person tries to hide or lie about their feelings to protect the other person or avoid conflict. Weaknesses are not taken advantage of or used during the 'heat of the moment.' Differences in opinions may be challenged but are respected. Neither person always or never gets their way.

**Boundaries** are the limits a person establishes for him or herself. These may be physical, emotional or sexual in nature. Each person's boundaries are discussed and identified in the relationship to avoid them from being crossed, (e.g., not showing affection in public because one person is uncomfortable with this behavior). For a relationship to be healthy, both

individuals must respect each other's boundaries. Boundaries may change during the course of the relationship and it is important to communicate these changes as they occur.

When open communication, equality, and respect for each other's boundaries are present, the relationship is built on trust and commitment. Each person feels good about the relationship and about themselves. The relationship does not define who they are, rather it strengthens and contributes to their individual identities.

### **History Isn't Much Help**

Unfortunately, there are not an abundance of healthy role models for relationships on television, in music, in literature or even in the history we teach. From King Henry VII to modern day soap operas, the messages received about relationships contribute to the very power imbalances that support and perpetuate sexual harassment, abusive relationships and sexual assault. Popular music is also filled with messages which equate "being in love" with dominance, control, violence and sex. We are led to believe that romance requires jealousy, passionate arguments and infidelity.

### **What Is Love?**

There are many images in our culture which portray and glamorize intimate relationships as being 'Happily Ever After.' We are led to believe that if we can find "the one," the relationship will be intensely romantic, passionate, and meet all of our needs. Messages about relationships with friends are also inaccurately conveyed. For example, to be a "true friend," a person must always defer to the wants, wishes and opinions of the other person.

Few images in our culture provide a realistic impression of the time, effort and commitment that healthy relationships require. Hence, it is not surprising that many teens (and adults) are confused about relationships and are unprepared when they change.

All relationships change over time. Friendships and dating relationships either strengthen or fade as people and circumstances change.

Love between friends of the same or opposite gender can be platonic. **Platonic Love** is a deep, caring concern without a sexual relationship. Platonic love can change into a type of love seen in dating relationships -- romantic, nurturing or obsessive.

**Romantic Love** is where everything seems perfect. Both partners feel like they have finally met "the one." Time, energy and thoughts are focused on the new relationship and the excitement it brings. Dating partners do special things with and for each other during this time. Couples may also make their status known to peers by writing names on notebooks, ignoring other friends or trading clothes.

After the couple gets to know each other better, the relationship becomes second nature. A couple may decide the relationship isn't fulfilling their expectations or that they have too many differences. At this point, the relationship will either end or begin to change. Romantic love becomes nurturing or obsessive.

**Nurturing Love** exists when both partners want each other to grow and be happy. Partners encourage each other to reach goals and maintain outside

friendships. Both people feel safe in voicing disagreements. Partners understand and support each other in reaching goals by not complaining when one person wants to spend time away from the relationship (e.g. on a school project or athletic try-outs). Both partners feel secure enough in the relationship to allow others to be in their lives.

If one partner wants to break up, the other partner may be upset and have a hard time dealing with the news. However, they do not feel self-destructive or like their life is over, or want to take out their feelings on the former partner. The person initiating the breakup does not feel trapped into staying by threats or guilt.

**Obsessive Love** is present in a relationship when one or both partners cut off friends and withdraw from activities. One person may be very jealous and possessive, and feel like if they are not together every minute, then their partner doesn't truly love them. Love becomes obsessive when one or both partners believe they cannot live without the other or that they will lose the other person if they are not constantly together.

Partners may express their needs by being controlling and critical. One person may demand that their partner have no interests, friends or activities in life but them. They may tell their partner that they are not good enough and make them feel dependent. They may try to convince their partner into thinking they are the only one who cares about them and that all they need is their support to do anything. One person may also engage in stalking-like behaviors, including following their partner to "check up" on him or her, calling repeatedly, overreacting and accusing a partner of cheating when he or

she is late. Not every obsessive relationship is abusive, but relationships like these are at risk for abuse. The abuse may begin or escalate when one partner tries to withdraw from the relationship by regaining friends, activities or time alone. {Information on romantic, obsessive and nurturing love has been adapted from work by Ginny NiCarthy in **Dating Violence: 'Young Women in Danger**, 1991.}

### **Fighting Fair**

We are often taught that conflict of any kind is bad, when in fact, disagreements are a normal and healthy part of any relationship. It is how these conflicts are handled that is important and determines if they will enhance or diminish the relationship. For example, if two people work through differences in opinion and hear each other's point of view, they are likely to turn disagreements into learning experiences and not hurt each other in the process. However, if two people refuse to listen to each other and bring up unresolved issues or use violence to "win," disagreements will hurt and may eventually destroy the relationship.

Fighting fair can only happen if both people are on equal ground and have a desire to resolve the issues. If one person is afraid of another, however, power imbalances exist and there is little room for fighting fair. The rules for fair fighting follow the indicators of a healthy relationship: sticking to the issue at hand, trying to have a win/win outcome, sometimes agreeing to disagree, and understanding that solutions don't have to be permanent.

By letting teens know conflict is okay, they can begin to practice rules for resolving conflict constructively. In this way, they

can strengthen or terminate a relationship if a compromise cannot be reached.

### **Teens Do Have Rights & Responsibilities**

Regardless of the type of relationship -- friend, family or dating -- it cannot be healthy unless both people know their personal boundaries (i.e., how they want to be treated) and have respect for the other person's boundaries. Knowing these rights and responsibilities lays the groundwork for developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

Teens may feel like they have very little power -- and thus no rights -- because of their age (e.g., parents may set a curfew or the school sets rules on conduct or dress).

While these external restrictions may feel limiting, teens do have a great deal of power regarding how they behave and their personal rights.

It is crucial for teens to develop or learn what rights and responsibilities they have in a relationship. By learning these rights, all teens can better identify abuse when it occurs and take steps to protect themselves from further harm.

***Borrowed from the Nebraska Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Coalition  
"Reaching & Teaching Teens"  
Curriculum 2002***

## ***Facts About Teen Dating Violence***

- The Center for Disease Control defines dating violence as the verbal, physical, sexual or emotional violence within a dating relationship.
- Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner -- a figure which far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth. *Antoinette Davis, 2008. Interpersonal and Physical Dating Violence among Teens. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency Focus.*
- In Rhode Island, an estimated 11% of high school students say they have been hit, slapped, or otherwise hurt physically by a girlfriend or boyfriend on purpose, a number slightly higher than the national statistic of 10%. *RI and National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*
- 7% of Rhode Island high school students say they have been forced to have sex when they did not want to. *RI and National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2009. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*
- 26% of teenage girls in a relationship report enduring repeated verbal abuse and nearly 20% of teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up. *Teenage Research Unlimited and Liz Claiborne Inc. 2005. Study on Teen Dating Abuse.*
- 1 in 4 teens who have been in a serious relationship say their boyfriend or girlfriend has tried to prevent them from spending time with friends or family. *Teenage Research Unlimited and Liz Claiborne Inc. 2006. Study on Teen Dating Abuse.*
- Only half of all tweens (age 11-14) claim to know the warning signs of a bad or unhealthy relationship. *Teenage Research Unlimited and Liz Claiborne, Inc. 2008. Study on Teen Dating Abuse.*
- Teen victims of dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors, engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide. *Silverman. 2001. Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Abuse, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality. Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).*
- Victims of dating violence are not only at an increased risk for injury, they are also more likely to engage in binge drinking, suicide attempts, physical fights, and sexual activity. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

## *Just So You Know*

Friends, girlfriends, and boyfriends – **all** deserve healthy relationships. For any event or activity, be sure to promote the characteristics of a healthy dating relationship:

### **Respect**

Are you accepted for who you are? No one should pressure you into doing things you are not comfortable with such as drinking, drugs or unwanted physical contact.

### **Safety**

Do you feel safe emotionally and physically? You should feel comfortable being you without fear of being put down. Being hurt or pressured is definitely not safe!

### **Support**

Do your friends care for you and want what is best for you? Your friends should understand if you can't hang out because you have to study or if you have plans with other friends.

### **Individuality**

Do you pretend to like something you don't or be someone you aren't? Be yourself; after all, being an individual is what makes you, you!

### **Fairness and Equality**

Do you have an equal say in relationships? From the activities you do together to the friends you hang out with, you should have equal say in the choices made in relationships.

### **Acceptance**

Do your friends or girlfriend or boyfriend accept you for who you really are? You shouldn't have to change who you are, or compromise your beliefs to make someone like you.

### **Honesty and Trust**

Are you always honest? Honesty builds trust. You can't have a healthy relationship without trust! If you have ever caught your friend or boyfriend or girlfriend in a huge lie, you know that it takes time to rebuild your trust.

### **Communication**

Do you talk face to face (nt jst txt!) about your feelings? Listen to one another and hear each other out. Text, Twitter, or Facebook messages should be respectful, not mean or inappropriate.

**Abuse** can be **verbal, emotional, sexual,** and/or **physical.**

In fact, **1 in 5 teens** in a dating relationship are hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner.

Here are the **warning signs** of an abusive dating relationship:

- Calls or texts a lot to find out where I am, who I'm with, or what I'm doing
- Is jealous, possessive, or controlling
- Ignores my opinion
- Keeps me away from friends or family
- Doesn't let me do what I like to do
- Follows me or shows up uninvited
- Gets angry very quickly or fights a lot
- Threatens suicide or threatens to hurt me or someone in my family
- Refuses to accept the relationship is over
- Uses alcohol or drugs and expects me to do so as well
- Touches or kisses me when I don't want to be touched
- Forces me to have sex
- Shoves, punches, slaps, pinches, kicks, hits, strangles, or hurts me in other physical ways

And always let students know where they can get help in your school or community center -- the school or community center counselor, nurse, a trusted teacher or other trusted adult, or a domestic violence advocate.



## *Awareness Activity Ideas*

Here are some ideas of activities for your school, community center or community. You can use these activities or come up with other new ideas to promote healthy relationships and increase awareness of teen dating abuse!

### **General School or Community Center-Wide Activities**

- Display posters in common areas around your school or community center and hand out the stickers, buttons and brochures in a fun, creative way.

### **School or Community Center-Wide Activism**

- Create a Relationships (Friend/Girlfriend/Boyfriend) Wall in a visible area in your school or community center. Have large strips of colored paper and markers. Students can write down what characteristic or quality they want in a healthy relationship. Post the characteristics or qualities later so they can be anonymous. Make sure all comments are appropriate and support healthy teen relationships.
- Have an information booth or table set up in the cafeteria, in the halls or at an athletic or community event to hand out educational materials.
- Create a “Promote Healthy Relationships” or “Antiviolence” pledge banner that students can sign during the month. The banner can be hung in a prominent location in your school or community center throughout the month.
- Give information about teen dating abuse or healthy relationships on your daily announcements. Sample announcements are at the end of this document.
- Write a story on teen dating abuse or digital dating abuse for your school or community center newspaper.
- Create a healthy relationships paper chain (using strips of colored paper) to be hung around your school or community center. Students committing to healthy relationships can sign their name on, decorate, or write a quality about a healthy relationship on the paper. The strips can be stapled together to create a chain that can be hung around your school or community center.
- Conduct a school or community center survey (make sure you have permission!) on the use of cell phones and social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, and others) and/or healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Have a healthy relationships rally with signs, chants, political speeches, campaign promises, and more!

- Promote “No Tolerance of Unhealthy or Abusive Relationships” – have signs in locker rooms to encourage peers to stop talking about the other gender in a way that demeans or disrespects them; encourage everyone to be an **upstander** by recognizing healthy relationship behavior. Students who observe healthy behavior can post them on a wall or turn them in to a staff person for recognition in some other way. For example, “Jake respected Annie’s decision to spend time with her friends.” “Lauren and David spent their time together studying for finals.”
- Have everyone in the school or community center take out their cell phone at the same time to send a healthy message to a boyfriend, girlfriend or to someone they think could use a supportive message from another student.

### Healthy Relationships Viral Campaign

- Encourage students of your school or community center to become a fan of the “Love is Respect” Facebook page.
- Create a message from your school or community center and have students post the same message on their pages, e.g. “XX School or community center knows love shouldn’t hurt.”
- On a specific day have student’s text each other positive, healthy messages. Give a prize to the most creative and inspiring text message or to the message that had the most positive impact.
- Positive Post Day – have students with social networking sites – Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter – to post a positive message on their wall.
- Take a group photo of the students in your school or community center or a winning art poster on healthy relationships and have everyone post the photo as their profile photo on Facebook for one day.

### Valentine’s Day

- Any activities you do for Valentine’s Day are a great way to promote healthy relationships – not the excessive drama in unhealthy relationships, but the characteristics of healthy relationships!
- Incorporate the healthy relationships theme into your school or community center’s Valentine’s Day dance. Have everyone wear a button or a statement about a healthy relationship as part of admission. Consider playing only music that promotes healthy relationships or includes healthy relationships messaging. Use the [Sound Relationships Nutritional Label](http://bit.ly/SoundLabel) developed by Start Strong Boston Teens (<http://bit.ly/SoundLabel>) available on the website [www.lovehatsreal.com](http://www.lovehatsreal.com).

## Educating Teens on Healthy Relationships

- If you sell flowers at your school or community center, have a healthy relationships message attached to each flower.

### Performance Activism

- Host a poetry slam at your local coffee shop or at your school or community center.
- Create and play a healthy relationship “Jeopardy” or “Family Feud” -style game.
- Develop a dating game skit that illustrates healthy vs. unhealthy relationships.

### Popular Culture

- Deconstruct popular culture – have a large area where teens can write down lyrics about healthy relationships and unhealthy relationships, or identify healthy or unhealthy relationships in popular television, books, or movies such as Glee, Vampire Diaries, the Twilight Saga series, or others!
- Have a “playlist competition” representing different music genres (rap, hip-hop, pop, country, alternative, punk, metal - whatever). Have students add songs (write down title and artist on a list) that are healthy (use the attached nutrition label hand-out if you want), and see what genre wins with the most healthy songs. Then see if you can have the playlist played at a school or community center related function, or over the intercom as approved by your school or community center’s Administrators.
- Start a movie, game, or TV show review through your school or community center newspaper and create your own ratings for healthy relationships modeling.
- Create a display and multi-media list in your resource center or library highlighting various sources for healthy teen relationships.
- Create a display in your resource center or library to raise awareness of the unhealthy relationship messages that teens get bombarded with through media, and give empowering ideas to reduce their effectiveness.

### Middle/Junior High School or Community Center Activities

- As a high school or community center student, you have the ability to positively influence younger teens – so use that influence to promote healthy teen relationships!
- Get permission to visit classes that will enter middle school or junior high next year. Do a fun and creative activity like a dream board or collage that helps them describe

healthy relationships/friendships, their rights, and how they can be a “good friend”. Or create a game for the class to learn – and practice – healthy relationship skills.

- Have a group of students – Student Council, athletes, choir, debate – go to the middle school or junior high school or community center to talk with pre-teens and young teens about healthy relationships.
- Have a group of students from drama go to an English class to read poems about healthy relationships.
- If the middle school, junior high school or community center is having a Valentine’s Dance, work with the dance committee to have healthy relationship messages at the dance – posters with quotes about healthy relationships by high school or community center students, healthy relationship or messages that students read between songs.
- Or use any of the activities in the tool kit and take it to the middle school or community center – you really have the power to positively influence younger teens!

### **English, American Government or Social Studies Activities**

- Have students study the changing roles of men and women throughout the last century in our society. And discuss how changing roles may affect power and control in teen relationships.
- Deconstruct popular media – television shows, music, books, and movies – what messages are teens given, especially about gender roles and healthy and unhealthy relationships?
- Start a healthy relationships book club – *Dreamland*, by Sarah Dessen, is a great book (we suggest you work with your librarian or English teacher closely on this activity). There is a set of discussion questions available at <http://us.penguin.com/static/rguides/us/dreamland.html>.
- In small groups, research the legal consequences of teen dating violence in Rhode Island (types of violence, consequences, ability of victim to get a protection order, etc). As a class, discuss how teen dating violence could affect the abuser. Ask a local prosecutor, domestic violence advocate or a survivor to come talk to your class.
- Hold a teen dating abuse or healthy relationships themed essay or short story contest.

### Health or Teen Living Class Activities

- Invite a guest speaker to talk to your class about teen dating abuse, healthy relationships, and/or the use of digital technology in relationships.
- Ask students in the class to track the amount of time they spend using technology each day (cell phones, email, IM, social networking sites, etc.). Once students determine how much time they spend using these technologies each day, have them go on a two day “digital diet,” by reducing the amount of time they spend using each technology. After the digital diet, have the students document what was hard about the diet and what was good about it.
- Create PSAs about teen dating abuse or healthy relationships to be shown on your daily announcements. Work with your health teacher, school or community center counselor or local domestic violence program to make sure the content is accurate!
- Create a short video on teen dating abuse or the importance of healthy teen relationships in collaboration with your health teacher or local domestic violence program to show during morning announcements, or another school or community center-wide event.

### Other Arts and Humanities-Based Activities

- Have a healthy relationships themed poster or t-shirt design challenge. Artists could illustrate one of the characteristics of healthy relationships – respect, equality, safety, individuality, acceptance, support, trust, communication, and fun!
- Have a door design challenge where the student body chooses which classroom door has the best message on healthy relationships or one of the characteristics of a healthy relationship. The doors can stay decorated throughout the month of February.
- Have a movie night with a panel discussion on healthy relationships.
- Have students rate popular music, video games, television shows, or other media as depicting healthy or unhealthy relationships. Use the [Sound Relationships nutritional label](http://bit.ly/SoundLabel) (<http://bit.ly/SoundLabel>) or [True View](http://www.trueview.com) for video, both available on [www.lovewhatsreal.com](http://www.lovewhatsreal.com).
- Have your drama class develop structured improvisations with specific key ideas on teen dating abuse and healthy relationships. The group can perform the skits for classmates, and post-performance discussions can be used as opportunities to explore the issues presented.
- Create a “Mural of Healthy Relationship Characteristics.” The mural can be created by art classes on poster board, paper, plywood panels, or other surface – as long as

you have permission. The mural can be displayed in your school or community center throughout the month of February or throughout the year.

### **Sporting Events**

- Have an information booth set up near the event entrance. Hand out educational materials (stickers, buttons, brochures, etc.).
- Have everyone attending the game enter the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline number into their phone at halftime – 1-866-331-9474.
- Have your cheer squad come up with a healthy relationship cheer for pre-game and half-time.

### **Community-wide activities**

- Work with your Mayor to get a Mayor's Proclamation signed. For an example of Proclamation language log on to [www.lovewhatsreal.com](http://www.lovewhatsreal.com) or contact the RICADV for a copy of the RI gubernatorial Proclamation.
- Work with your local TV news, newspaper, or radio station to do a story on teen dating abuse, healthy relationships, and the activities you are doing in your school or community center during National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month. For information on the importance of healthy relationships log on to [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).
- Write an opinion piece for your local newspaper on the importance of education about teen dating abuse and healthy relationships in school or community centers.
- Send information home with parents about the importance of healthy relationships and/or teen dating abuse.
- Facilitate an information session for parents on healthy teen relationships or teen dating abuse at your school or community center.
- Attend a city council or school board meeting to discuss the importance of in-school education about teen dating abuse and the promotion of healthy teen relationships.
- Hold a press conference on the importance of healthy teen relationships and current dating abuse risks or statistics. Use [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) for stats. Encourage teens to attend for extra credit in classes (with teachers' prior approval of course).
- Create healthy teens text, Facebook, email messages. See how far you can reach! Send messages every weekday for a month.

- Work with your local library to develop a healthy teen relationships multi-media list.
- Create a dream board where local teens hang out. They can add their hopes and what they deserve for healthy relationships in various creative forms. Think of the skate and bike parks, ski hills, after school or community center clubs and recreation centers, movie theaters, etc. Present the dream board to local or state officials and ask for public display.

### *Sample Announcements*

#### **Week 1 -**

It is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month! This month the student council will [describe planned events].

#### **Facts of the week:**

- Dating abuse can be verbal, emotional, sexual, and/or physical.
- 1 in 2 teens in a dating relationship compromise their beliefs to please a girlfriend or boyfriend.

Respect is key in a healthy relationship: Are you accepted for who you are in your relationships? No one should make you feel bad about yourself or pressure you into compromising your beliefs.

#### **Week 2 -**

It's the second week of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month. This week the student council will be [describe any events to take place this week].

#### **Fact/tip of the week:**

- 11% of Rhode Island high school students have been hit, slapped, or physically hurt by their boyfriends or girlfriends during the past year.
- 7% of Rhode Island high school students have been forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse.
- Trust your instincts – if you feel unsafe in a relationship you probably are. Know that danger is often the highest when you are ending a relationship (but it will eventually be safer) and you should get help from a trusted adult immediately.

**Safety is key in a healthy relationship:** Do you feel emotionally and physically safe in your relationship? You should! Everyone deserves to feel safe. If someone makes you feel bad about yourself, pressures you into unwanted physical contact, or physically hurts you, talk to a trusted adult immediately. [School or community center counselor's name] is always available to help.

**Week 3 –**

It's the third week of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month. This week the student council will [describe any events to take place this week].

**Facts/tip of the week:**

- If trapped in an abusive relationship, 73% of teens said they would turn to a friend for help; but only
- 33% who have been in or known about an abusive relationship said they have told anyone about it.
- If you have a friend who is being abused, know you can help. Listen to and support your friend and don't blame him or her for the abuse. Encourage your friend to seek help and find an adult you can talk to or call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474.

Support is key to a healthy relationship. Does your boyfriend, girlfriend or friend care for you and want what is best for you? If not, tell them that what is best for him or her may not always be best for you.

**Week 4 –**

This is the last week of National Teen Dating Awareness & Prevention Month. To end the month we will be [discuss any activities that are taking place this week].

**Fact/tip of the week:**

- One in four teens (24%) reported feeling pressure to date – 14% said they would do almost anything to keep a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- Anyone can be involved in an abusive dating relationship. Know that if you are being abused you might think it is your fault, but it's not!

Individuality is key in a healthy relationship: Do you pretend to like something you don't or be someone you aren't to make your relationship work? You shouldn't have to give up old friends or activities just to make your relationship work. Don't lose sight of who you are – be yourself; after all, being an individual is what makes you, you!

***Borrowed from the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence "Love What's Real Campaign" 2011***



## ***Rhode Island Domestic and Dating Violence Resources***

The Statewide Rhode Island Victims of Crime Helpline **1.800.494.8100**  
(This Helpline is for any victim of crime including domestic violence, sexual assault and hate crimes, and is a resource for victims, bystanders and professionals that want to help.)



### **RICADV Member Agencies**

(These agencies provide a range of services for domestic and dating violence victims including support groups, counseling, shelter and transitional housing, prevention services, court based advocacy, children who witness programming, etc. Contact the one in your area for more information.)

Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center	<b>723.3057</b>
Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County	<b>782.3990</b>
Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center	<b>738.1700</b>
Sojourner House	<b>658.4334</b>
Women's Center of Rhode Island	<b>861.2760</b>
Women's Resource Center	<b>847.2533</b>

### **Legal Resources**

Attorney General's Office (Domestic & Sexual Violence -DVSA)	<b>274.4400</b>
Diocese of Providence ( <i>Immigration Services DVSA</i> )	<b>421-7833 ext. 229</b>
Garrahy Judicial Complex (Restraining Order Office)	<b>458.3372</b>
International Institute ( <i>Immigration Services DVSA</i> )	<b>461-5940</b>
Kent County Courthouse (main line)	<b>822.6680</b>
McGrath Judicial Complex	<b>782.4174</b>
Murray Judicial Complex (Family Court Clerk)	<b>841.8340</b>
RI Bar Association Lawyer Referral	<b>421.7799</b>
RI Legal Services	<b>274.2652</b>
Volunteer Lawyer Program	<b>800.339.7758</b>

### **Other Local Resources**

Day One (Sexual Assault Coalition)	<b>421.4100</b>
Katie Brown Educational Program	<b>508.678.4466</b>
Lindsay Ann Burke Memorial Fund	<b><u><a href="http://www.labmf.org">www.labmf.org</a></u></b>
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence	<b>467.9940</b>

## *National Domestic and Dating Violence Resources*

Love Is Respect National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

A Call to Men [www.acalltomen.org](http://www.acalltomen.org)

A Thin Line – digital and technology abuse [www.athinline.org](http://www.athinline.org)

Break the Cycle - [www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)

Choose Respect [www.cdc.gov/chooserespect](http://www.cdc.gov/chooserespect)

Dating Matters [www.vetoviolence.org/datingmatters/](http://www.vetoviolence.org/datingmatters/)

Expect Respect [www.SafePlace.org](http://www.SafePlace.org)

Futures Without Violence [www.futureswithoutviolence.org](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org)

Love is Not Abuse - [www.loveisnotabuse.com](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com)

MADE (Moms and Dads for Education to Stop Teen Dating Abuse)

[http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/guest/search/-/journal\\_content/56/10123/84973](http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/guest/search/-/journal_content/56/10123/84973)

Peaceful Families Project [www.peacefulfamilies.org](http://www.peacefulfamilies.org)

Start Strong Rhode Island [www.hkupwithrespect.com](http://www.hkupwithrespect.com)

That's Not Cool Campaign [www.thatshotcool.com](http://www.thatshotcool.com)

Veto Violence [www.vetoviolence.org](http://www.vetoviolence.org)



## ***Healthy Relationships Sample Lesson Plans***

*(Borrowed from the Reaching and Teaching Teens Curriculum from NDVSAC)*

### **Lesson One: Teen Bill of Rights**

Purpose: Youth will define their personal rights and identify their responsibilities to treat others in the same manner.

Let youth know today's session will focus on personal rights and the responsibilities which accompany these rights. **Begin** by having youth identify ways they **do not** want to be treated by others. List these responses on the board. Common responses may include:

- being called names or put down
- being criticized
- having their belongings gone through by school personnel or parents
- not being listened to or believed
- being told what they can or cannot do

From this list, **ask** youth to identify ways they want to be treated by others. Common responses may include:

- being trusted
- being treated with respect
- having opinions heard
- having their privacy respected
- being supported in their decisions by others

Let youth know for every right they have identified, there is a responsibility which accompanies it. For example, if they have the right to be treated with respect, this means they have the responsibility to treat others with respect. **Ask** youth to look at the list of rights and identify the responsibilities which accompany these rights.

While youth may not agree on each right or responsibility, point out that everyone deserves to have their rights respected and that everyone has the responsibility to treat others the way they want to be treated.

**Distribute** the *Teen Bill of Rights* to youth and compare it to the list they created.

# Teen Bill of Rights

## *I Have the Right to...*

- Be treated with respect.
- Trust my instincts.
- Say “no” and be heard.
- Have my privacy respected.
- Accept a gift without having to give anything in return.
- Ask for help if I need it.
- Have someone point out my strengths and assets.
- Have loved ones support me.
- Have private time and my own space.
- Have others listen to what I have to say - even if they don't agree.
- Live a violence-free life.
- Be good to myself.

## *I Have the Responsibility to...*

- Communicate my thoughts, ideas and feelings clearly.
- Stick to my limits and boundaries.
- Respect the limits and boundaries of others.
- Listen to what others have to say and have the right to reject their ideas, but not the person.
- Treat others as my equal.

## *I Have the Right to Be Happy!*

## Lesson Two: It Will Happen Again

Purpose: Youth will identify and define the components of a healthy relationship and contrast these components with an unhealthy relationship.

**Distribute** *Healthy Relationships Work Like This...* handout and read through it as a group.

**Next**, have youth get into small groups and **distribute** *It Will Happen Again* handout.

**Ask** each group to read the story and list the ways Leslie and Ray's relationship was not based on equality, open communication, respect for boundaries, and trust and commitment.

When youth are ready, have them **list** each component on the board / newsprint / SMART board, etc., and **ask** youth to share the examples they identified for each. Below are some examples.

### Equality

- Leslie doesn't want Ray to have any friends outside the relationship.
- Leslie won't let Ray choose the movie and says he always picks a dumb one.

### Communication

- Leslie walks off when Ray won't change his mind or plans to please her.
- Ray is afraid to tell Leslie he wants to breakup because she has threatened suicide.
- Ray tries to cancel plans with Leslie.
- Leslie makes Ray feel guilty about changing plans and tells him he doesn't care about her.
- Leslie uses her apology to Ray as a reason he should give up his plans.

### Boundaries

- Leslie looks for Ray at the mall and doesn't want him to be without her.
- Leslie holds Ray's hand, which embarrasses him.
- Leslie tries to kiss Ray in public.

### Trust & Commitment

- Leslie and Ray spend all their time together and don't allow for outside friends or interests.
- Leslie puts Ray down in front of their friends.
- Leslie puts down Ray's friends as a reason for him not to spend time with them.
- Leslie believes Ray is more interested in Jena because he introduces her to a friend.

To end the session, **ask** youth **what they think will happen next in this relationship?**

## Healthy Relationships Work Like This

They are based on...

### **...Equality**

Equality means equal rights in a relationship. Each person respects, trusts and believes the other. While you may have different interests and abilities, neither person considers themselves better than the other. Decisions are made together. Neither person sets rules for the relationship or each other -- like not allowing their boyfriend to talk to other girls, or not letting their girlfriend go to a party without them. You feel comfortable giving and receiving things from each other. You share responsibilities -- spending time with each others' friends and family, driving or paying on dates.

### **...Open Communication**

In a healthy relationship, you are able to talk about anything and know you will be heard. Both people can say what they mean and mean what they say. Remember, no matter how good the relationship, you won't agree on everything. What is important is listening and respecting your partner's opinions. Neither person never or always gets their way -- each is willing to compromise. Open communication is also about speaking up for yourself and not feeling scared of how your boyfriend, girlfriend or friend will react.

### **...Respect for Boundaries**

Boundaries are the physical, sexual and emotional limits you establish in your relationships. Physical boundaries mean how close someone can come to you and not make you uncomfortable. For example, you may feel comfortable sitting close to your boyfriend or girlfriend on a bus, but awkward sitting that close to a stranger. Emotional boundaries refer to how much of yourself you share with someone (e.g., feelings, thoughts, and ideas). It also means respecting things the other person tells you in confidence and not saying things to embarrass or hurt them. Sexual boundaries are what you are comfortable doing sexually. Boundaries may change over time. By talking openly, both of you will know what to expect from the other person and how you will be treated.

### **...Trust & Commitment**

If the above components of a healthy relationship are present, you and your partner have a relationship based on equality - both people trust, respect and like each other. You feel good about who you are and feel comfortable in the relationship. You share interests and friends, and are committed to each other.

## It Will Happen Again

Leslie and Ray have been dating since the school year started. Lately, they have been spending so much time together that their friends are teasing them about it. So, when Ray's friends ask him to hang out at the mall this weekend, he agrees. He is not sure how Leslie will react since they usually spend every weekend together. When Ray tells Leslie he has other plans, she is hurt and tells him it's obvious his friends are more important than her. Ray tries to explain that he hasn't seen his friends for a long time and that wanting to go with them doesn't mean he doesn't care about her. Leslie refuses to listen and walks off.

On Saturday morning, Leslie calls Ray to apologize and asks him if he will cancel his plans so they can talk about what happened. Ray tells her they can talk about it later. He asks her to meet him at the mall at 5:00 p.m. with a group of her friends to go to a movie. When she agrees, he asks her to bring Jena because one of his friends wants to meet her.

When Leslie and her friends arrive at the mall at 1:00 p.m., she starts looking for Ray. Her friends tell her to back off, so they can meet other guys and shop. When Leslie sees Ray, she walks over and begins to talk to him. Ray is glad to see her, but feels embarrassed that she came over and grabbed his hand in front of his friends. When Leslie's friends come over, Ray sees Jena and introduces her to his friends. Leslie is upset that Ray is paying attention to Jena and says, "You weren't that excited to see me. Now I know why you really wanted her to come." Ray's friends start to walk away. Leslie tries to kiss Ray, but he backs away and tells her to meet them later.

Ray's friends tease him about Leslie all afternoon, saying she must really put out if she is that affectionate in public. Ray is uncomfortable but doesn't answer them. When they meet in front of the theater, Leslie announces that Ray always picks a dumb movie, and asks one of his friends what he wants to see. During the movie, Leslie is mad because Jena is sitting on the other side of Ray. After the movie, everyone goes out to eat and Leslie flirts with Ray's friends to make him jealous.

Ray has wanted to break up for a while -- especially after the way Leslie acted in front of his friends. But, he doesn't know how because the last time he said anything, she said she would kill herself if they ever broke up.

## Lesson Plan Three: Fighting Fair

**Purpose:** Youth will practice skills for resolving conflicts in an effective manner and understand that disagreements are normal in relationships.

**Distribute** *Fighting Fair Techniques* to young people. As a group, **read** through the handout. For each technique, **ask** youth to identify the opposite behavior or "unfair fighting technique" and list these on the board/newsprint/ SMART board (e.g., instead of talking about one issue, a person may bring up past events which may or may not be related to the issue at hand).

**Next, divide** youth into small groups and **assign** each group a scenario from the *Fighting Fair* Role Plays. **Ask** youth to act out the scenario using one or more of the unfair fighting techniques listed on the board. **Identify** each of the tactics used on the board/newsprint/ SMART board for use in later discussion.

Now, **challenge** the groups to act out the same scenario using fighting fair techniques. After the role plays, use the following questions to guide discussion.

- Which ways to fight unfairly do young people use most often?
- Why do people fight unfairly?
- What happens when one person does not fight fairly? Is the other person more likely to fight unfairly as well?
- What happened when both people used fair fighting techniques to solve the conflict?
- Can concerns be discussed and resolved using the fighting fair techniques?
- Can you use fighting fair techniques with your family, friends or dating partner? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- Is it more difficult to fight fairly with someone you care about? Why or why not?
- Now that you are familiar with these techniques, how will you respond when someone fights unfairly with you?



## *Fighting Fair Techniques*

All people, no matter how much they care, will disagree. Try the following ideas when disagreements arise.

- **Only deal with one problem at a time.** Hold back from bringing up the past. If something that happened in the past is bothering you, wait until you have talked through what just happened before you bring it up.
- **Describe how the problem affects you.** Share your feelings with "I" messages instead of "you" phrases. "You" carries blame. Avoid sarcasm and he said/she said.
- **Describe the problem** without attacking **the other person.** Shouting, blaming, and put downs just make the situation worse. Remember, no one always or never does something wrong or right.
- **Ask how the person is feeling.** Don't guess or tell a person what to think or how to feel.
- **Keep an open mind** and listen to what the other person says. Avoid interrupting or putting words into the other person's mouth. Don't take the position that you have to be right all the time.
- **Talk** without interruptions. Turn off the television or radio. If someone calls during this time, call them back later or put your phone on silent to avoid getting interrupted.
- Keeping a sense of humor is okay, but do not make fun of the other person.
- **Wait until the effects of drugs or alcohol have worn off.** If you are intoxicated, you won't be able to think clearly or know what is really going on. This goes for the other person, too.
- **Take a break if you are not getting any closer to** reaching an agreement. This gives each person time to think about what they want to happen and possible solutions. Agree when you will talk about the problem again before you leave.
- **Do not destroy property.** Tearing up letters, poems or pictures will not help work out the problem, and you may regret it later.
- **There is NEVER an excuse for using violence.** This includes using threats ("I can find someone else!"), coercion ("If you really loved me..."), and physical violence.
- **Once you have come up with a solution to the problem, remember it doesn't have to be permanent.** Try it for awhile and if it doesn't work for one of you, talk about it and try something else.
- **Don't try to have 1 winner and 1 loser.** If a discussion ends this way, you will both lose. Be willing to compromise. Sometimes the best you can do is agree to disagree.

### *Role Plays: Fighting Fair*

<p>1. You have very strong views about the upcoming presidential election and your views are completely opposite of the person you are dating. They also have strong opinions on who is more qualified to be president. You begin to discuss your views, each trying to convince the other that your position is correct and based on facts, not opinions.</p>	<p>5. You think your sister has been acting differently lately, especially since she started hanging out with new friends. You know they get drunk a lot. You suspect your sister has been drinking with them. When your sister shows up at a school dance, she can hardly walk. How do you deal with the issue?</p>
<p>2. It is Thanksgiving time, and your partner wants to spend Thanksgiving with their family. Your family has always spent this day together at your aunt's home and you want them to come to your celebration. You and your partner are explaining your reasons to each other, and trying to reach a decision.</p>	<p>6. You just found out that you are flunking math class. Your teacher tells you to find someone to study with you. The only person who agrees to help can only study on Thursday nights. This is the day you and your partner always do something together. How can you resolve this conflict?</p>
<p>3. You and your best friend decide to go to a movie that opens on Friday. It's now Thursday night, and your partner calls, telling you about something on Friday that you don't want to miss. You call your best friend to see if you can go to the movie on Saturday instead. They tell you they already have plans. You try to resolve the issue with your best friend.</p>	<p>7. You have been assigned to do a project for class. Your group meets in the cafeteria to divide up the project. One person is flirting with you, although they know you are dating someone. As you get up to leave, this person puts their arm around you. You see your partner down the hall, and they have seen what happened. How do you deal with this issue?</p>
<p>4. Your partner has spent the last 3 weekends in a row with their friends. You ask them to do something with you this weekend, and they tell you they already have plans, but ask you to go out the next weekend. How do you resolve the issue?</p>	<p>8. You have had the same best friend since kindergarten. Your best friend and your partner do not get along. Since you really like both people, you want to talk with your partner and find out what they don't like about your friend.</p>

## Lesson Four: Understanding Love and Healthy Relationships

Purpose: Youth will learn about the different types of love and will be able to identify healthy behaviors and potentially abusive and controlling behaviors in a relationship.

**Distribute** the *What Kind of Love Are You In?* handout to youth. As a group, **read** the descriptions of each type of love. After each description, **ask** youth to identify the possible positive and negative consequences of being in that type of love. As a follow up, ask youth to identify characters in media (movies, reality TV, sitcoms, etc.) that played examples of each type of love.

Next, **ask** for three youth to volunteer to be actors. Privately, **assign** each volunteer a role based on each type of love. **Explain** to the remainder of youth that they need to figure out which type of love each actor is portraying. Youth will have the opportunity to ask the actors **three questions** and the actors must respond based on their assigned role. For example, youth may ask questions like “*How long have you two been dating?*” or “*How did you two meet?*” “*What happens when you two can’t agree on something?*” It is important that the actors stay in character when responding to the questions. **If** time permits, once the youth have guessed each actor’s role, repeat the activity with a new group of volunteers.

Next, **remind** youth that

- Healthy relationships are based on equality, trust, respect and open communication.
- Relationships are often inaccurately portrayed in the media. Healthy relationships require time, commitment and effort.
- Healthy relationships are not conflict free. Disagreements are normal and healthy in relationships – it is how these disagreements are resolved that is important.

**Distribute** *Obsessive Love Isn’t Real Love...* handout and read it as a group. **Ask** youth if they know any couples in their own age bracket that have healthy relationships? Do they know any couples in their own age bracket that have unhealthy relationships?

**Distribute** brochures for local resources (and page 33 and 34 of this packet) and explain that there is help available. If any of their friends are being abused or are in a controlling relationship, there are adults and places for them to turn to for help. And, if as a friend, you need help bringing up the topic to your friend, these same places can help too. You can reach out online, on the phone, and anonymously or talk to an adult you trust.

## *What Kind Of Love Are You In?*

### **Romantic Love**

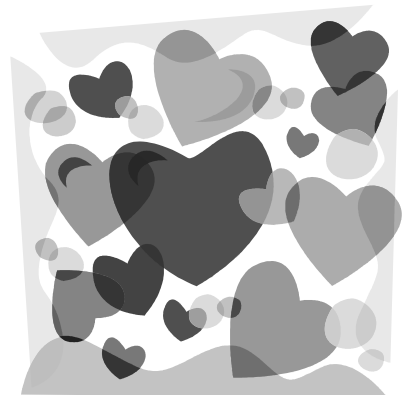
Most dating relationships start with romantic love. Everything seems perfect -- you feel like you have finally found "the one." It is exciting. You forget about everyone else in the world. You do special things together, buy gifts, write cards and talk on the phone. After you get to know each other better, your relationship starts to fit into your usual life. You may find you have different interests and opinions, and try to make the relationship work around these differences. Or you may decide to end the relationship.

Romantic love changes over time. It becomes either nurturing or obsessive. Romance still exists in the relationship, but it is a part, not all of what you have together.

### **Nurturing Love**

In this type of love, you both wish for the other to grow and be happy. You encourage each other to have friends and enjoy separate activities. You support each other at home, school or work. You feel comfortable sharing your feelings with each other.

If one partner wants to break up, the other person is upset and may have a hard time dealing with it. But neither feels like their life is over. The partner may be hurt, but will not take the hurt out on their former partner or themselves.



### **Obsessive Love**



A relationship becomes obsessive if one or both partners believe they cannot live without the other. It is normal to want to be together every minute at the beginning of the relationship. But, if one or both partners continue to feel like they *need* and only want to be with the other, the relationship is obsessive. Partners may find themselves doing things -- anything -- so that they can be together. When they are not together, one or both may feel like they will lose each other or that the other person does not care about them. Not every obsessive relationship is abusive, but relationships like these are at risk for becoming abusive.

## ***Obsessive Love Isn't Real Love***

*"When Jenny made plans to play basketball with her friends, James called her six times before she left her house. He wanted to know that she missed him and why she wanted to go without him. Jenny started feeling trapped and controlled, and even though she loved him, she told James they shouldn't see each other for a few days. That night, around 2 a.m., James called saying he was going to kill himself because she didn't love him anymore."*

Obsession, jealousy and possessiveness in a relationship are not about love or caring in a relationship -- they are about insecurity, control and manipulation.

### ***Your Relationship is Healthy if...***



- You trust your partner.
- Your partner likes your friends and encourages you to spend time with them and wants to include them in his/her life as well as yours.
- You make important decisions together.
- Your partner understands when you spend time away from him or her.
- You don't have to lie to protect your partner's reputation or cover for his/her mistakes.
- Your partner encourages you to enjoy different activities (like joining the volleyball team or football team, running for student government, or being in a play) and helps you reach your goals.
- Your partner likes you for who you are -- not just for what you look like.
- You are not afraid to say what you think and why you think that way. You like to hear how your partner thinks, and don't always have to agree.
- You have both a friendship and a physical attraction.
- You don't have to be with your partner 24/7.

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RI Family Court

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