



Dating Abuse & Violence: Stop it. Stand up. **Voice out. Move out.**

I hear these sentences often, “He shouted at me and tried to manhandle me”, “He threw my mobile phone into the gutter”, “He threatened me”, “She blackmailed me”,

Oh, there are many, many more phrases I keep hearing. Why does this happen? Why do things change all of a sudden? Why do frustrations occur in a seemingly smooth loving relationship?

Remember, real love gives away, while selfish, lustful love leads into abuse and violence. Sometimes this happens very subtly while sometimes it happens very openly.

Studies have found that abused girls or boys are significantly more likely to get involved in risky behaviour. They are four to six times more likely to get pregnant before marriage or involve in sex with multiple partners, do drugs or carry a weapon and eight to nine times more likely to have tried to commit suicide. (abc News/Aug 17, 2014)

“Adolescent dating violence is common among young people. It also overlaps between victimization and perpetration and appears across different forms of dating abuse,” says Michele

Ybarra, MPH, PhD. She works with the Center for Innovative Public Health Research, based in San Clemente, California.

What is abuse or dating violence?

Abuse or dating violence includes any form of sexual assault, physical violence, and verbal or emotional abuse.

Initially when a boy exhibits extreme feelings of jealousy, a girl might find it flattering. But remember, jealous and possessive behaviour can definitely lead to abuse and violence. You cannot ignore that.

Examples of verbal or emotional abuse can range from insults and name-calling to using a pager or cell phone as a form of control over the other person.



So, what are the Warning Signs?

Think for a while.

- **Before you met your boyfriend or girlfriend, you had more friends than you do now.** This exclusivity can and could open windows of abuse and violence. You need covering. Remember, Social support network :)
- **Your grades have declined and you don't care about it, and have begun walking in rebellion and disrespect.**
- **The girl cries frequently or is very sad. The guy is so irritated and frustrated.**
- **You are compelled to immediately call back when your love texts you or gives you a missed call.**
- **Your love gets jealous if you look at or chat with another person from the opposite sex.**
- **You have become aggressive and have a troubled family life that involves physical abuse, drinking or drugs.**
- **You have become critical of your own appearance, talents and abilities.**
- **Your move and decision is controlled by the other person. The other person gets *****issed off when you make your decision and do not listen to him or her.**
- **You are being manipulated to give in sexually (sometimes you don't even know this) and then you are totally ignored for some days.**

Hey... let me give you more tips.... the above ones are just the major ones but there are many, many more. Let me point some of them out quickly:

1. Recognize the widespread problem of teen dating & sexual violence and how we each contribute to it. Realization and being alert is half problem solved :)

2. Educate yourself and others on the reality of dating & sexual violence. Talk about this with your friends.
3. Know that dating & sexual violence is about power and control. Recognize that sexual violence can be a part of dating violence.
4. Use respectful language and speak up against sexism and the attitudes, jokes, comments, and behaviour that you see contributing to it. Hey, if they are just a few simple slips in jokes and pulling legs, here and there that is fine. But if this gets really serious over a period of time, take a note of it.
5. Define what you want in a healthy relationship. Equality, open communication and boundaries are great values to consider.
6. Define your own masculinity or femininity. Challenge society's view of men as violent and dominant individuals and women as passive and subordinate objects. Though there are God made characteristics that add such uniqueness to each gender, sometimes they can get too overloaded.
7. Be media literate. Pay attention to images and messages in music, TV, online and in movies about gender and violence. Talk about what you don't like and what you do like. At least know and recognize these issues.
8. Respect yourself and others. Never take others for granted.
9. Realize you always have the right to end a relationship and that you should always respect someone else's wish to end a relationship with you. Remember, do not hold on to it too strong :)
10. Practice bystander intervention. Safely prevent or stop violence when you see it happening.
11. Know how to stay safe and protect your privacy on the internet. Don't harass, threaten, or spread rumours about others online.
12. Contact your local legislators and political leaders and ask them to support bills that will advocate for victims' rights, hold perpetrators accountable and assist prevention and direct service agencies with funding.
13. Use your voice to talk about dating & sexual violence, and healthy relationships & sexual respect: Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper or an article for your school or workplace newsletter.

Believe that a safer world is possible. We all deserve a safe and happy life free from violence. Many teens question why? **Please understand that in spite of all that is happening, God is still in control and is working out beautiful lives out of it all.**

Remember, I was so badly abused. As those incidents flash by once in a while, I still feel disgusted of how each man and woman abused me and made me do things that I disliked. I developed a deep fear and hurt. But over a period of time God in His mercy and love, slowly but steadily healed me. Today I am totally a new person, but with unique emotions and inner convictions. Today, when I see someone being harassed or abused, I cannot sit quiet.

This evening, I was walking through CHINA TOWN STREET (I am in another country). I passed by a couple walking around on the same street and one of them was abusing the other. I saw fear and frustration in the eyes of this person. But this is a different country and I could not do anything. I had to walk away. But when I came around to the same corner, I now saw the other person stand up and voice out. In my heart I said Yes! Yes!

Dear teenager, be careful and be wise. Don't just give in and keep taking. Stop it. Stand up. Voice out. Move out.

This is your life. Take control of it.