



## February is Teen Dating Abuse Awareness Month



### Flirting Meets Technology in Teen Sexting

Are you talking with your teen about sexting? If not, you should. Now. Teens enjoy the privacy and freedom that cell phones give them from their parents. But when they use that freedom and their cell phones to explore their budding sexuality, it's easy to understand why 70% of teens report sending or receiving sexually explicit texts or emails. It's modern day "flirting" and it can have serious consequences.

Currently when teens engage in sexting, the sending or posting of nude or partially nude images

of minors, the law considers it child pornography. That could mean a host of consequences. Besides the humiliation and stress, teens may be required to register as a sex offender.



College applications, participation in school sports, and future job prospects are also at risk.

#### Parenting Tips:

- ◆ Agree to a "code of ethics" for technology use. For example, no sexting and no posting/sending pictures you wouldn't want adults to see.
- ◆ Consider taking their phone at a designated time each evening and returning it in the morning.
  - ◆ Ask if they have ever received a sexual message/image on their phone and if they think it's okay. Follow up with a discussion about consequences and how many people they think a "sext" reaches.
  - ◆ Remind your teen that content on a cell phone isn't private and even deleted texts can be retrieved.

Help your teen avoid the potential life consequences of sexting by learning more about the issue and talking about it before they put themselves in a compromising position. Find more [HERE](#).

### Talk to your Teen

**"Sometimes fighting feels like love."** These five words, spoken by a local teen in a troubled relationship, illustrate just how confusing young love can be. Adding to her confusion, like many teens, she believes that the more jealous/possessive a partner is, the more they are loved. Luckily, with a little guidance, this confusion can be replaced with clarity and empowerment to seek out healthy relationships. February is nationally recognized as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. It's the perfect time to talk to our youth about loving relationships.



Use Valentine's Day to remind teens that love is more about freedom and equality than possession and control. Have you ever noticed how teens can easily "call out" a parent they believe to be controlling but have difficulty recognizing when a dating partner is doing the same? You can help them resolve this inconsistency by pointing out controlling behaviors like constant texting and demands for exclusivity. Reinforce teen's natural move towards independence at this age by encouraging them to maintain their individuality in relationships. Warn them that extreme jealousy has no place in a healthy relationship and is a red flag for escalating abuse.

Longmont has recently experienced an increase in teen dating abuse. It is critical that we act now to prevent this increase from becoming a trend. Especially since violent relationships in adolescence can have serious ramifications by putting the victims at higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and adult re-victimization. Start the conversation today. Talking to teens isn't as scary as it sounds.

Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley offers free counseling for teens experiencing dating abuse. Call 303-772-4422 or text a message to 720-340-TERA if you know a teen needing help. For more information on Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, check out

[LongmontDomesticViolence.org](http://LongmontDomesticViolence.org).

For tips on how to start the conversation, click [HERE](#)

# Teen Dating Abuse



**1 in 3**

U.S. teens in a relationship are a victim of **Physical, Sexual or Emotional Abuse**



**1/10**

U.S. teens in a relationship are purposely **Hit, Slapped, or Physically Hurt**

**Emotional Abuse** is saying or doing something to another that creates fear, lowers self esteem, or controls the person's feelings, thoughts and behaviors.

**Physical Abuse** is intentional, unwanted contact with another person's body; or threats of physical harm or to one's physical safety.

**Sexual Abuse** is any sexual act that is done against someone's will and without their consent; including non-contact sexual abuse.

**Dating Abuse is a pattern of behavior that one person uses over another in a current or former intimate relationship to gain and maintain**

## Signs of An Abusive Relationship

Teens who are being abused may:

- Always be with their partner
- Be restricted from seeing family and friends
- Receive frequent, harassing texts or phone calls from their partner
- Frequently miss school, work, or social occasions
- Talk about their partner's temper, jealousy, or possessiveness
- Make excuses for their partner's behavior
- Seem afraid or anxious to please their partner
- Worry about making their partner mad

## What You Can Do

1. Be a role model for healthy relationships
2. Clearly define "dating abuse" and then educate teens about it.
3. Create opportunities for teens to comfortably and openly talk about relationship abuse.
4. Have a conversation. Listen without judgment, ask questions, and don't lecture.



Call: 24/7: 303.772.4422

Text: 720.340.TERA

- Love is Respect: [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)
- That's Not Cool: [www.thatnotcool.com](http://www.thatnotcool.com)
- Break the Cycle: [breakthecycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org)

For information/resources on Teen Dating Abuse, Click [HERE](#)