

Help and information formation

Emergency: 911 or local police

The Assaulted Women's Helpline:

1-866-863-0511 | 1-866-863-7868 (TTY)
(anonymous, confidential, services in 154 languages)

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 | www.kidshelpphone.ca

Femaid (French crisis line):

1-877-336-2433 | 1-866-860-7082 (TTY)

Community services (Niagara Region, Georgian Bay, Toronto): 211 | www.211ontario.ca

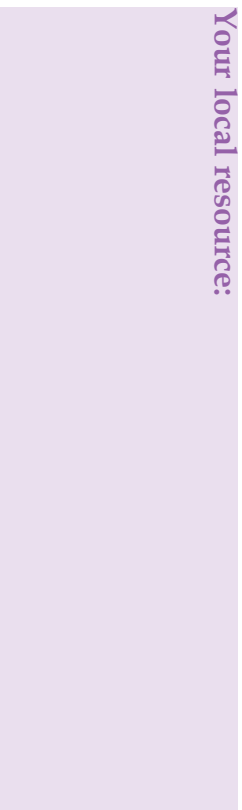
Sexual Assault Centres: www.ocrc.ca

Shelters: www.shelternet.ca

Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres:
www.satcontario.com

Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies:
www.oacas.org

Your local resource:



Metropolitan Action Committee on
Violence Against Women and Children

158 Spadina Road, Toronto, ON, M5R 2T8

1-877-558-5570 | 416-392-3031 (TTY) | info@metrac.org

More info and statistics: www.metrac.org | www.owjn.org



... of dating violence

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Some material adapted from *Dating Violence and How to Recognize it* (Generation Family Resource Centre) and *Building Healthy Relationships: 10 Tips for Girls* (Ontario Women's Directorate). Funding provided by the Government of Ontario, Ontario Women's Directorate.



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What do you want in a boyfriend/girlfriend (or date)?

How do you want in a relationship? What are you expecting? Be specific.

- Fun going out together
- Someone to talk to
- Someone you can laugh and be yourself with
- Other:

What do you think about violence and abuse in relationships? What does a healthy relationship look or feel like to you?

Checklist: have you experienced these from a partner ...

- Pushing, pinching, blocking
- Threatening words against you or your family/friends
- Jealousy, possessiveness, wanting to own you
- Following, constant emailing, calling, or texting
- Name-calling, blaming, put-downs, insults
- Telling you what to do, where to go, who to talk to, and how to dress
- Keeping you away from friends and family
- Refusals to use condoms or other safer sex methods
- Pushing or tricking you into sexual contact
- Forced touching or kissing

These are all forms of dating violence. Go to the back cover to find places you can contact to get information and help.

Dating Violence

Do your thing. Going out with someone is great, but that doesn't mean you have to be together all of the time. You need your own space and your own interests.

Be aware. Girls are more likely to be abused by someone they know - like their boyfriend - than by a stranger. If you feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts and do what you can to change the situation. Hang out with friends you trust, leave when you feel unsafe, or call your parents or someone you can rely on.

Danger zone! Some girls think that if a boy ever hits them, they'd be able to leave him. But a boy doesn't usually start hitting his girlfriend out of the blue. He may start by telling you how to dress and do your hair. He may get really jealous and try to separate you from your friends. He may insult you, yell, or break things. Watch out for these warning signs of abuse. If any of these things happen, you can talk to someone you trust or call a helpline (see back cover).

Latisha and Jasmine went to a local women's centre. They spoke to someone who helped Latisha find out what she could do. She even helped Latisha make a special list:

"In a relationship, I have a RIGHT to:

- Be treated with respect cuz I deserve it*
- Speak my mind cuz I'm smart and have a lot to say*
- Keep my friends and family cuz they're important to me*
- Have control over my own body cuz it's mine*
- Take care of myself cuz I love myself*
- Be accepted for who I am, cuz I'm unique and beautiful*
- Be safe and loved, for real*

And I won't accept anything less!

Dating violence is any form of abuse between people who are dating, hanging out, or going out together. It can happen in any dating relationship - between people who have just met or between people who have been together for a long time.

Statistics show that girls and women most often experience abuse from boys and men they know and trust¹. But it can happen in same-sex relationships too (girls dating girls or boys dating boys)². Young women are most at risk of experiencing abuse³, so it's important that we know our rights and be treated with respect in all of our relationships.

Dating violence isn't about love - it's one person trying to control and have power over the other person. It's never okay. No one should have to live with abuse. Dating violence can take different forms, such as:

Physical abuse - hitting, blocking, pushing, pinching, biting, choking, threatening with a weapon, taking away a person's walking stick or cane, controlling a person's wheelchair

Latisha and Marcus knew each other from their group of friends.

One time when everyone was hanging out at the corner store, Marcus whispered to Latisha, "Want to go to the movies? Just me and you." Latisha didn't even know he was interested in her. But she thought he was funny and cute, so she said yes.

Latisha and Marcus started going to the movies a lot after that. They really liked going out - their friends even started to call them the "happy couple".

Sources:

1. Statistics Canada (2006), *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*, p. 11.
2. Department of Justice Canada, *Spousal Abuse: A Fact Sheet from the Department of Justice Canada*.
3. Statistics Canada (2006), *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*, p. 14.

Emotional abuse - threatening, pressuring, blaming, smashing stuff, possessiveness, isolating someone, cheating to make someone feel insecure, insulting someone's identity (e.g. culture, race, gender, income level, sexual orientation, physical/ mental abilities)

Sexual abuse - unwanted sexual contact, forcing someone to do sexual things, pushing or tricking someone into sex, forced kissing or touching, refusing to use a condom or other method for safer sex

Harassment - stalking (repeated unwanted contact), following you everywhere, emailing, texting, and phoning constantly, opening your mail and reading your emails, posting pictures of you on the internet without your permission

Financial abuse - controlling money, making someone depend on you for money, refusing to pay child support

Spiritual abuse - insulting someone's beliefs, stopping someone from following their faith or religion, preventing someone from meeting with their faith community

It started when Marcus told LatiSha that her skirt "looks too good on you." He said he didn't like it when other guys looked at her when they were out. At first, LatiSha was kind of flattered by it, but Marcus began to tell her how to dress. Once, when they were with their group of friends at the mall, Marcus pulled LatiSha's arm hard and said, "Walk close to me and zip up your jacket. You're letting it all hang out." LatiSha's girlfriends saw how embarrassed she was but didn't know what to do.

When you're in a healthy relationship, you:

- Feel good about yourself
- Feel good about who you are (e.g. your background, where you live, what you look like, your opinions and ideas)
- Communicate how you feel and can listen to others do the same
- Get respect and give respect to others
- Know that your body and feelings are important and should be treated with respect and care

Healthy relationships should be between people who are dating, but they should also be between friends and family members. Here are some tips to creating healthy relationships:

You're worth it! Feel good about yourself and about being a girl. This is the first step to having healthy relationships.

Expect Respect. Everyone deserves to be treated as an equal and with respect.

GIRLFRIEND. The word "friend"

is there for a reason. Friends listen to and care for each other. Expect people you go out with to treat you like a real friend. They should like you for who you are.

Express your thoughts and feelings. You should be listened to and taken seriously.

Ups and downs. It's normal to feel hurt or angry sometimes, but in a healthy relationship, people don't yell or call each other names. Things can be worked out through talking and listening to each other.

Effects of Dating Violence

Dating violence hurts. It can make you feel bad about yourself or make you feel like you deserve to be treated badly. It can make you feel really scared and alone. Sometimes, people blame those being abused. They may say things like, "Why did you let it happen?" or "What did you do to make him mad?" But abuse is always the abuser's fault.

If you think you are being abused:

- Talk with a family member, friend, doctor, teacher, counselor, faith leader, or someone else you trust
- Get help from a community service (see back cover)
- Avoid being alone, especially with your partner
- Use different routes to go to places and tell someone where you'll be and when you'll get back
- Arrange times to have someone check in with you regularly

Numbers and websites are on the back cover. For some community services and phone lines, you can speak in the language you're most comfortable with. If you think you have been abusive to someone, don't let it continue. Get help.

Warning Signs

Latisha finally decided to talk to her best friend, Jasmine, about what she was going through. Jasmine admitted that she saw something was wrong but she had no idea what to do. Latisha kept saying, "I'm sorry I let this happen to me. I'm so stupid to let Marcus treat me like this." But Jasmine told her that it wasn't her fault and that she would always be there for her. She offered to help Latisha figure out what she could do next.

Dating violence can start as emotional and move to physical or sexual abuse, but it doesn't always have to go in that order. Sometimes there are warning signs for dating violence. They might be "bad vibes" your body or brain sends you. For example, you might feel scared sometimes. You might not feel the person you're going out with is trustworthy. You might feel pressure to change who you are just to please the person you're with. Sometimes you can't tell what you feel but you know things don't feel right. If you get these bad vibes, don't ignore them. They can help you protect yourself.

Other warning signs of dating violence can be:

- Jealousy, possessiveness (e.g., getting mad when you hang with your friends, checking up on you all the time)
- Trying to control what you do, how you dress, where you go, and who you communicate with
- Making all the decisions, not respecting your ideas, needs, or opinions
- Driving fast or behaving dangerously

Latisha was really upset when she found out that Marcus made fun of her hearing aid to one of his friends. Her girlfriends said she shouldn't take that from him. But when Latisha confronted Marcus, he got angry and they got into a big argument. "You always make me so mad! No one else would want you, you know," he yelled. "Who wants a girl who can't hear properly and can't even afford to make herself look good?"

- Accusing you of lying or cheating
 - Not taking "no" for an answer (e.g. pressuring you to have sex, kiss, or make out)
 - Criticizing who you are, what you say, your friends and family, or what you look like (e.g. telling you that you look ugly, calling you stupid, mocking your language)
 - Making you feel afraid, uncomfortable, unloved, or confused (e.g. threatening to tell others your secrets)
 - Being disrespectful to girls and women in general (e.g. sexist attitudes)
 - Tricking you, embarrassing you
 - Blaming you for their problems
 - Being aggressive (e.g. pushing, breaking your stuff to scare you)
 - Hurting your pets
 - Harming a child to get back at you (if this happens, the law says you have to call the Children's Aid Society)
- Remember, it's normal for people to get angry and have disagreements with each other. But it's not okay for someone to hurt others or themselves. That's abuse.

Latisha liked being Marcus' girlfriend when he was friendly, but it was really hard when he was pushy and mean. She started blaming herself and stopped talking to her girlfriends because Marcus would get annoyed when she spent time with them. He would keep calling and text messaging Latisha until she felt guilty and went home.

All this made Latisha remember how, when she was a kid, her dad used to disrespect her mom. She promised that she'd never let anyone do that to her. But history seemed to be repeating itself, which made Latisha feel even worse ...

Roots of Dating Violence

Dating violence happens when someone wants to control and have power over the person they're dating. Although there are many forms of dating violence, they are all an abuse of power. Young women are most at risk of facing abuse from boys and men, because in our society, girls and women just don't get the respect and rights they deserve. Some things have changed, but girls and women aren't always viewed as important, strong, deserving, and smart as boys and men.

Some young women are more at risk of facing violence and have fewer places to go for help than others, because they get even less respect in our society. This includes young women who are new to Canada, young women who are living with disabilities or are Deaf, young women who have lower incomes, young women from Communities of Colour or Aboriginal Communities, young women who are lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered, young mothers, and young women living in reserves and rural areas.

Violence against women by men is a big problem and it's learned. Sometimes, children know of or see their mothers or women family members getting abused at home. They can come to think that abuse in relationships is acceptable or okay. Girls can grow up thinking that they deserve abuse and boys can grow up thinking that they should act abusively.

Our society doesn't challenge violence or sexism very much. It's often seen as natural and expected. Look at the media - girls and women are abused and disrespected on television, in movies, on the radio, and in advertisements all the time. It affects us all.