

UNDERSTANDING DATING ABUSE -

TEENAGE RELATIONSHIPS

LOVE
IS NOT
ABUSE



IT'S NEVER OK
TO ABUSE YOUR PARTNER



Staffordshire
Women's Aid
Together Against Domestic Violence Since 1976



Cannock
Chase
COUNCIL



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WHAT IS DATING ABUSE?

Dating abuse is when one person controls or dominates another person's quality of life through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal or physical assaults. It crosses all racial, age, economic and social lines.

Abuse is not an accident – it is a pattern of behaviour that is done on purpose and to make the other person feel frightened or bad about themselves.



WHAT IS EMOTIONAL ABUSE?

Emotional abuse may not result in physical marks, but it does leave emotional scars. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased.

Emotional abuse is like brainwashing - it wears away at the victim's self confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions and self concept. Emotional abuse takes many forms including:

Verbal abuse including:

- Comments about appearance, body or clothes, indecent remarks, questions or comments about someone's sex life, requests for sexual favours, sexual demands made by someone of the opposite sex, or by someone of the same sex, promises or threats concerning a person's employment conditions in return for sexual favours, accusations
- Teasing or making fun of someone, purposely embarrassing someone, insulting or destroying a person's property, threats to reveal private information about a person including photos/images/texts, threats of physical force against someone/people and pets they may know, name calling and isolation
- Telling someone they are mad/nobody likes them/believes them

Non-verbal including:

- Looking or staring at a person's body, display of sexually explicit material such as calendars, pin-ups or magazines, hand gestures, displaying of weapons
- Intimidation
- Giving someone the 'silent treatment'

Emotional blackmail including:

- A system of threats and punishment on a person, by someone close to them, in an attempt to control their behaviour.

What are the signs for a victim?

- They are afraid of their date/partner
- They are afraid of making their date/partner angry and are unable to even disagree with their date/partner
- Their date/partner has publicly embarrassed and humiliated them



WHAT IS PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Physical abuse is the most obvious form of domestic violence as it is the most visible. Physical abuse is physical force or violence that results in bodily injury, pain or impairment and includes assault, inappropriate restraint and actual/grievous bodily harm.

There are a broad range of behaviours that come under the heading of physical abuse and these can include:

Threats

- Making and/or carrying out threats to hurt someone
- Threatening to leave, commit suicide, report someone to the Police/Social Services
- Making someone drop charges
- Making someone do illegal things
- Threats to hurt pets/animals

Physical violence,

- Hitting, slapping, choking, biting, pinching, kicking, punching, shoving, hair pulling
- Any other type of physical force to cause pain, with or without the use of a weapon
- It also includes being prevented from seeking medical attention or forcing someone to take drugs/medication
- Death

What are the signs for a victim?

- They have been subjected to physical attacks by their date/partner
- Their date/partner has held them down, pushed them, or even punched, kicked or thrown things at them

WHAT IS CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR?

One of the most common reasons for the downfall of a relationship is one partner's need to control the other. Over time, controlling behaviour usually gets worse not better and can really undermine the good things in a relationship. Feeling constantly controlled or manipulated will destroy your confidence, make a person anxious and depressed, and can often isolate them from people and situations that make them feel good about themselves.

What is financial abuse?

Financial abuse is a form of mistreatment and fraud in which someone forcibly controls another person's money or other assets. It can involve stealing cash, not allowing a victim to take part in financial decisions or preventing a victim from having a job. It can also limit a victim's ability to access help.

What are the signs for a victim?

- Their date/partner has tried to keep them from seeing friends
- They are restricted from contacting their family
- They have been forced to choose between their date/partner and their family and friends
- Their date/partner insists on knowing where they are at all times and demands that they justify everything they do
- Their date/partner will be furious if they spoke with another man/woman
- Their date/partner expects them to ask permission before seeking health care
- Their date/partner dictates what they wear and how they appear in public

Financial Abuse

- Their date/partner steals or takes their money from them
- Their date/partner does not allow them to take part in any financial decisions
- Their date/partner won't allow them to have a job or go to college
- Their date/partner forces them to steal, or asked them to become involved in prostitution to make money
- Their date/partner takes out loans and credit cards in their name
- Runs up debt in their name and doesn't pay it back
- Checks receipts

WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE?

Psychological abuse is the wilful infliction of mental or emotional anguish caused by threats, humiliation and/or other verbal or nonverbal conduct.

Psychological abuse often leaves the victim blaming themselves and questioning their own perceptions over the behaviour of an abusive partner. This type of abuse can take a number of forms:

Abuse

A person subjects or exposes their partner to behaviour that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Manipulation

A type of social influence such as peer pressure, that aims to change the perception or behaviour of others through underhanded, deceptive, or abusive tactics.

What are the signs for a victim?

- Their date/partner threatens to use violence against them or against himself/herself/pets/children/other family members (e.g. "If they leave me, I will kill myself ")



WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Sexual abuse is any form of non-consensual physical contact. It refers to any action that pressures or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't want to do.

Examples of sexual abuse can include:

- Unwanted kissing or touching
- Unwanted rough or violent sexual activity including use of objects such as sex toys
- Rape or attempted rape.
- Refusing to use condoms or restricting someone's access to contraception
- Keeping someone from protecting themselves from sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Sexual contact with someone who is very drunk, drugged, unconscious or otherwise unable to give a clear and informed "yes" or "no."
- Threatening someone into unwanted sexual activity
- Repeatedly pressuring someone to have sex or perform sexual acts
- Repeatedly using sexual insults towards someone
- Showing of indecent images
- Forcing someone to participate in pornography

What are the signs for a victim?

- Their date/partner forces them to have sex with him/her or another person
- They are afraid to say 'no' to their date/partner's demand for a sexual act from him/her
- Their date/partner does not respect them, but is only interested in gratifying his/her own sexual needs
- Their date/partner does not care about the consequences of the sexual act or how they feel about it.

If someone needs support with sexual exploitation and sexual abuse including rape, they should contact Staffordshire Women's Aid on **0870 2700 123**.



JESS'S STORY

My name is Jess I am 16 years old. When I was in Year 10 I started going out with a boy in Year 11, at first, things were great. He wanted to spend lots of time with me, meeting me before school and between lessons and hanging out with a group of his friends after school; he made me feel so special.

I started seeing less and less of my friends, spending more and more time with him, when I did want to see my friends he would go in a mood and we would end up arguing, eventually it was easier not to bother seeing my friends.

His parents were really nice and they would let us spend time in his room together, they even took me on holiday with them. One day we were in his room and we were messing about play fighting, this time was different. He held my arms behind my back and even when I started to cry and beg him to let go of me he didn't. I was really scared of him.

Afterwards he laughed at me and said he was only messing around and I should stop being so sensitive. This started happening more and more and each time he would hurt me more. I started getting bruises where he had held my arms and wrists. People started to notice my bruises and ask questions. I was worried what people might say and think about me so I made sure my arms were covered.

I felt like there was no one I could talk to about what was happening to me - I loved my boyfriend and I couldn't understand why he was doing this to me.

He became more controlling, he used to check my phone and my Facebook account, and he became angry if a boy commented on my posts or photo's. I used to be confident and outgoing but I became lonely and withdrawn. I no longer felt like I had any friends.

We had been going out together for 3 months when he started to pressure me to have sex with him. When we first got together he said he would wait until I was ready but this changed and he would laugh at me and call me names like frigid. He would threaten to dump me if I didn't do what he wanted. I felt like him and his mates were laughing at me.

I was struggling to concentrate in class so my grades were falling; my form tutor became worried about me as I was constantly pale and tired. She listened to me and suggested I talk to someone from Women's Aid as she said she thought his behaviour was abusive. After receiving support in school from Women's Aid - I ended my relationship, they helped me to see that what I was experiencing was abuse and that it wasn't ok.

I'm happy now and my confidence is growing every day. When I decide to have another relationship in the future I will look out for signs of controlling behaviour.

SARAH'S STORY

My name is Sarah. When I was 15 I met Tony, he was 19 and a really good laugh, as well as being good looking and tall, he had a bit of a reputation 'he could look after himself'. He made me feel special in all sorts of ways, especially when we would go out together, he was quite possessive but he said it was because he loved me and never wanted anyone else to love or hurt me. I was flattered, I quite liked it really.

One night he asked me to stay over at his house, so I rang home and asked my mum if I could stay at Emma's – Well a little fib wouldn't hurt would it? I stayed over; it felt really grown up, staying at my boyfriend's own house. We decided to do the same thing the following week. Again I asked mum if I could stay at Emma's, and again she agreed. I arrived at Tony's, full of excitement, what film would we watch? What will we have to eat? Will he cook? Tony answered the door and gave me a small glass of wine. 'I'm going out with some of the lads tonight for a bit, you'll be ok here won't you?' he said, I looked at him, 'But we were having a night in you said' 'I've changed my mind, so run back to mummy and tell her you lied or be here when I get back, it's up to you. If you're not here when I get back I'll know you don't love me', he snarled at me 'And don't start blarneying either because that really annoys me'. This was the first time I'd seen this side of him, which I put down to him being a bit stressed. I drank my wine and stayed in watching telly until Tony got back. Tony walked into the living room and turned the telly off 'Well what have you been up to?' 'Just watching telly' I smiled 'I don't mean now I mean in the last few weeks' he looked really angry. Confused

I replied 'I really don't know what you are talking about'. Suddenly I felt something hit me in the face, then another, then another, I could taste blood in my mouth, I didn't have a clue what was going on or why he was so angry, eventually the hitting stopped and as I stood in the bathroom washing out my mouth I looked in the mirror, I didn't recognise myself not just from the bruises and cuts but also from the care free fun, strong girl I had been before I met Tony.

The following day I didn't know what to do, I was close to my mum but I would have to tell her I'd lied to her, so when I did go home I lied again saying that I had fallen when messing around with my mate.

On Monday at school nobody said anything about my bruises, only my friend Emma and so I lied again as I felt so ashamed and stupid. After school Tony was waiting for me, he was charming and funny until no one else was around then he started apologising, saying he'd never do anything like that again, that he loved me and he had been told I slept with someone else on his night out and he felt jealous and what with the drink and all. I believed him and we met up again that night.

Tony didn't punch me again for some time; he started checking my mobile, wanted passwords to my internet accounts, slapped me occasionally (only joking, he would say) and moved from being a bit possessive to being really jealous.

One evening we were walking through the park and a lad I knew from school walked past 'Hi Sexy' he called to me, I smiled. Tony grabbed my arms to stop me walking, he started screaming at me, he slapped me, hit me and then punched me loads of times in my stomach and face. He grabbed my hand and started pulling me along the path, I was bleeding and in terrible pain, I could barely stand up as the pain in my stomach and chest was so bad. Once back at his house he said that I deserved it for flirting, I deserved

it for being a slag, I deserved it because I didn't treat him right, I didn't have any real friends because I was so hard to be around and that I should stay the night and think about what I'd done. He couldn't even look at me; he was so upset at what I'd done. I was so confused, maybe I did deserve it, and maybe I had got everything all wrong.

I went to bed but I couldn't sleep. Tony came into the room and I flinched, he asked did I fancy a cuddle, I said no so he dragged me out of bed, down the stairs and into the garden, I was only wearing my pants and t-shirt, I was still in so much pain. I was left out in the freezing darkness, all alone. I realised I had to do something, I felt like I was going to die. I just turned out of the garden and walked home, with no shoes or trousers, covered in blood and really cold.

When I got home, I told my mum what had happened that day, I still lied though saying it was the first time, and I couldn't bear for her to know the whole truth. My mum asked me if I wanted to call the Police, I hadn't ever really thought about it, I didn't think anyone would care. In the morning I went to the doctors, I had three broken ribs, a fractured cheek bone and 2 dislocated fingers.

The following week my mum rang a Domestic Violence Helpline and made a referral for me to get some support. I am still getting support and although its hard work, the Police are looking to arrest Tony but he's disappeared. I think Social Services contacted mum too. I hope the old me is slowly but surely coming back, now that I know there are people to support me and I don't have to live in fear and always telling lies to cover Tony. I haven't seen Tony and although part of me misses him, I don't ever want to see him again.

THE DATING BASICS:

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Relationships can range from healthy to unhealthy, to abusive and everywhere in between. It can be hard to determine where a relationship falls, especially if someone hasn't dated a lot.

Is My Relationship Healthy?

In a healthy relationship:

- A partner respects someone
- A Partner is open and honest
- A partner supports someone and their choices even when they disagree with someone
- Both partners have equal say
- A partner understands that someone needs to study or hang out with friends or family
- A partner can communicate their feelings without being afraid of negative consequences
- Both partners feel safe around each other.

A good partner is not excessively jealous and does not make someone feel guilty when they spend time with family and friends. A good partner also compliments a person, encourages them to achieve their goals and does not resent their achievements.

The following tips can help someone create and maintain a healthy relationship:

- **Speak Up** – In a healthy relationship, if something is bothering a person, it's best to talk about it instead of holding it in
- **Respect a Partner** – A partner's wishes and feelings have value. A partner lets someone know they are making an effort to keep their ideas in mind. Mutual respect is essential in maintaining healthy relationships.

- **Compromise** - Disagreements are a natural part of healthy relationships, but it's important that partners find a way to compromise if they disagree on something. Try to solve conflicts in a fair and rational way.
- **Be Supportive** - Offer reassurance and encouragement to each other. Also, let each other know when they need their support. Healthy relationships are about building each other up, not putting each other down.
- **Respect Each Other's Privacy** - Just because someone's in a relationship, doesn't mean they have to share everything and constantly be together. Healthy relationships require space.

WHAT IS AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

Relationships that are not healthy are based on power and control.

In the early stages of an abusive relationship, someone may not think the unhealthy behaviours are a big deal. However, there is no excuse for abuse of any kind. Remember that abuse is always a choice and people deserve to be respected!

Even though someone cannot change their partner, they can make changes in their own life to stay safe. A victim should consider leaving their partner before the abuse gets worse.

If someone is still unsure whether they're in a healthy relationship, our Healthy Relationships Quiz can help them. A copy is provided in this resource pack.



THE WARNING SIGNS

Is this abuse?

Dating abuse is a pattern of destructive behaviours used to exert power and control over a partner which usually involves a series of abusive behaviours over a period of time.

It can be hard to tell when behaviour crosses the line from healthy to unhealthy or even abusive. Use these warning signs of abuse to see if someone's relationship is going in the wrong direction:

- Checking mobile or emails without permission
- Constantly putting someone down
- Extreme jealousy or insecurity
- Explosive temper
- Isolating someone from family or friends
- Making false accusations
- Mood swings
- Physically hurting someone in any way
- Possessiveness
- Telling someone what to do
- Repeatedly pressuring someone to have sex

OTHER FACTORS

There are a number of other factors associated with dating abuse and these include:

Drugs, Alcohol & Abuse

What's the Risk?

Especially if someone is in an abusive relationship, drugs and alcohol can make an unhealthy situation worse. An abusive partner may get someone drunk or high to take advantage of them. When someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they're more vulnerable to:

- Being sexually assaulted
- Having unsafe or unprotected sex
- Getting a sexually transmitted disease
- Getting pregnant
- Addiction

It's Not My Fault!

It's common for abusive partners to blame drugs or alcohol for their unhealthy behaviour. They do not accept responsibility for their actions or address the real reasons for the abuse. Drugs and alcohol do affect a person's judgment and behaviour, but they are not a reason for violent behaviour.

Social Networking Safety

People deserve to be in a safe and healthy relationship, whether in person or online. If a partner is digitally abusive, the victim needs to know that their behaviour is not acceptable and could be illegal.

Digital Abuse

Digital dating abuse is the use of technologies such as texting and social networking to bully, harass, stalk or intimidate a partner.

Someone may be experiencing digital abuse if their partner:

- Tells someone who they can or can't be friends with on Facebook and other sites.
- Sends someone negative, insulting or even threatening emails, Facebook messages, tweets, or other messages online.
- Uses sites like Facebook, Twitter, and others to keep constant tabs on someone.
- Puts someone down in their status updates.
- Sends someone unwanted, explicit pictures and demands their partner to send some in return.
- Pressures someone to send explicit video.
- Steals or insists to be given someone's passwords.
- Constantly texts their partner and makes them feel like they can't be separated from their phone for fear that someone will be punished.
- Looks through their partners phone frequently, checks up on their pictures, texts and outgoing calls.

For more information about this abuse, visit the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre which works across the UK tackling child sex abuse.

Sexting & Texting

Next to talking one-on-one, texting is currently one of the most instant forms of communication. While texting might be the perfect platform to say a quick "hi", there are some things to watch out for in a textual relationship with a partner.

Sexting

Does a partner ask for inappropriate pictures of someone? Or send them to their partner? Even if someone trusts that their partner will be the only one to ever see the pictures, they can never guarantee that they won't end up on someone else's phone or online.

Sexting can also have legal consequences. Any nude photos or video of someone under 18 could be considered child pornography, which is always illegal.

Reading Someone Else's Texts

Does a partner ask to read someone's texts? Or read them behind their back? Healthy relationships are built on trust, not jealousy. Victims have the right to privacy and the ability to talk to whomever they like.



WHY DO PEOPLE STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

People who have never been abused often wonder why a person wouldn't just leave. They don't understand that breaking up can be more complicated than it seems.

There are many reasons why people stay in abusive relationships including:

Conflicting emotions

- Fear
- Believing abuse is normal
- Fear of being 'outed' in relation to sexuality
- Embarrassment
- Low self-esteem
- Love

Pressure


- Social/peer pressure
- Cultural/religious reasons
- Pregnancy/parenting

Reliance on the abusive partner

- Lack of money/lifestyle
- Disability
- Feeling helpless
- Nowhere to go
 - Is there help out there?
 - I can't afford to move
 - I'm not entitled to housing
 - I'll have to leave school, college or university

Issue with leaving

- Having to leave your home/siblings/belongings and possessions/pets/children/parents/carer/job
- Will have to leave behind friends and family
- Abuse can escalate at the time of leaving/when left



ARE YOU ABUSIVE YOURSELF?

If someone is worried about their abusive behaviour and would like to change, ask them to contact Respect on **0808 802 4040**.

GET HELP

If you think someone is in an abusive relationship, this will help you provide them with help and support. .

Victims will probably feel confused about what to do. They may fear what their partner will do if they leave or how their friends and family will react when they tell them. If they are financially or physically dependent on their partner, leaving may feel impossible. They may also think that people won't take them seriously.

If someone has friends or family members who are in unhealthy or abusive relationships, the most important thing they can do is be supportive and listen to them. Don't judge them! Understand that leaving an unhealthy or abusive relationship is never easy. For help and advice contact:

Staffordshire Women's Aid

Offers a specialist service which provides support to young people who have experienced domestic violence/abuse. They recognise how difficult it can be to report and discuss domestic violence or abuse.

The service aims to help young people through this tough process at their own pace and in ways which suit each individual.

It is a confidential service, so information will be kept confidential unless staff have concerns for someone's safety.

Call Staffordshire Women's Aid on **0870 2700 123**.

This service also recognises that domestic violence/abuse can affect Men too and is available to all men; heterosexual and gay/bi-sexual male victims of abuse.

They will take a referral which will involve questions about a situation. A referral will then be allocated to a specialist worker who will contact the victim to make an appointment at a time and place which is convenient and safe.

If someone is under 16 and would like support, they need to speak to an adult they trust and ask them to contact Staffordshire Women's Aid to make a referral on their behalf. A copy of the referral leaflet is provided in this pack.

Staffordshire Women's Aid often provide often provide support for young people in schools, however for this to happen they would need the school to be aware of a referral and agree to their support.

If they are a young person who is/has suffering/suffered domestic and sexual abuse, they should contact **0870 2700 123** and get help and advice from a Children and Young People's Support Worker.

If someone does not want a service, but would like more information, Women's Aid provide a national website specifically aimed at young people – visit **www.thehideout.org.uk**

Other useful contacts include:

Staffordshire County Council's Youth Box
www.youthbox.info

Childline 0800 11 11

Staffordshire Buddies **01543 411413**
www.staffordshirebuddies.co.uk

Staffordshire Police **101** (non-emergency)
In an emergency call **999**

Respect (if someone thinks their behaviour is abusive)
0808 802 4040

CEOP – **www.ceop.police.uk**

Broken Rainbow UK **0300 999 5428**
www.brokenrainbow.org.uk (for LGBT relationships)



YOUR LOCAL CAMPAIGN

Cannock Chase Council launched the 'Love is not abuse' campaign in 2013 on behalf of the Chase Community Partnership to raise awareness of dating abuse. Dating abuse is taking place across Cannock Chase District amongst young people in teenage relationships. However, it is extremely under-reported.

The **'Love is not abuse'** campaign aims to address this by raising awareness of what dating abuse is and challenging abusive behaviour. Copies of the promotional material are provided in this resource pack.

A local theatre group – Actionhaus were also commissioned to write, produce and create a piece of musical theatre addressing this issue. You can watch their performance using the DVD provided – **'Drug Love'**.

The models and cast members used in this campaign were existing students attending Cannock Chase High School.

To download further information visit
www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/itsneverok

SIGN THE PLEDGE!

I promise to try to have healthy, safe relationships that are free from violence and fear. I pledge that I will support friends and/or family members, who are in an abusive relationship and promote safe and positive relationships.

A copy of the pledge is provided in this resource pack.





For more information on dating abuse contact
Staffordshire Women's Aid on 0870 2700 123
or visit www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/itsneverok