

Dating VIOLENCE

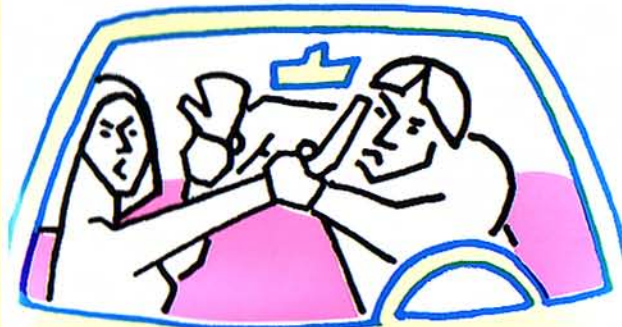
What is Dating Violence?

Dating violence is violence which can happen on a first date, or with a regular partner at anytime within a relationship. It often occurs when a dating partner feels jealous, has been drinking, or when a young woman says "no" to sex. Such violence can take a variety of forms.

One form of abuse which quickly comes to mind is **physical assault**. Young women are shaken, hit, punched, slapped, and kicked by the young men they date. Physical abuse may result in anything from a black eye to hospitalization for multiple injuries.

There is also abuse which leaves no physical marks – **emotional abuse**. It can involve being called names such as "fat", "ugly", "stupid". It could involve being accused of "sleeping around". It can also be the threat of violence against a person or the things that they love (like pets). Sometimes it may be a threat to harm themselves (I'll kill myself if you dump me!).

Forced sexual contact (often called date rape) is another form of abuse. Young women often enter into sexual relationships with boyfriends because they are threatened with losing them, or being called frigid. Sometimes they are physically forced into the situation.



What Are Some of the Warning Signs?

- ▶ Do you find that your partner is overly jealous of your contact with other friends or relatives?
- ▶ Do you find that your partner doesn't want you to participate in activities that don't include him?
- ▶ Does your partner criticize the way you dress, talk or dance?

- ▶ Are there times when your partner's teasing hurts your feelings?
- ▶ Does your partner make fun of you in front of family or friends?
- ▶ Do you ever feel pressured to do something you do not approve of?
- ▶ Has your partner ever hit you?

Trust

If you have answered yes to any of these questions you could be in what is called an "unhealthy" relationship. *Trust* is a main ingredient in a healthy relationship, trust in the freedom to be yourself, and to share your thoughts and feelings honestly.

Is Dating Violence O.K.?

- Forcing a person to do or accept something they don't want is never okay.
- Forcing young women to do sexual things they don't want to do is called **sexual assault**, and it is a crime.
- Hurting someone or threatening to hurt them, is another form of **assault** and it is also illegal.
- The police will prosecute a person for **assault** whenever they can get evidence.



JEALOUSY/TOUGH CRITICISM/HURT FEELINGS

Where Does it

Come From?

- ▶ Violence, including violence against women, is everywhere in our society.
- ▶ Many boys wrongly learn from early childhood that violence is not only acceptable but an important part of being a man. Many little girls wrongly learn that it is an important part of being a woman to be passive and accepting.
- ▶ Pornography, which portrays women as sexual objects only, often includes the message that violence against women is okay, and sometimes even that it is fun and that women want it.
- ▶ The media advertising, T.V. shows, and so on, often send the same message, though in a more subtle way.



Can I Make the

Violence Go Away?

The short answer is "No". Violence usually gets worse with time not better. Many young people are told by their abusive partners that it is their fault that the relationship is not working. Victims will try to change themselves hoping to make things better. It takes a long time to realize that the abusers are the ones that have to change, and that we can't do it for them.

What Can I Do

To Protect Myself?

- Be assertive, say no.**
- Tell your partner you don't like what he is doing.**
- Make sure you have an alternate way home.**

What are my Rights?

You have the right to say no and you have the right to change your mind. Remember, nobody has the right to force you to do anything you don't want to do. Even if a young man spends money on you, you don't owe him sex. And he hasn't bought the right to hurt you. Trust your feelings. If it doesn't feel right don't do it!



What if I am

Abused Anyway?

Talk to someone you trust. Battering happens to many young people. It's not your fault. If you find you are talking to someone who ignores your concerns or who you feel doesn't respect you, don't be discouraged. Try another source. You may want to contact your public health nurse or your guidance counsellor. Other sources of advice and/or assistance are local transition houses, crisis lines and women's centres where you may get advice and assistance without giving your name.



For more information on dating violence contact:

Women's Policy Office
4th Floor, West Block
Confederation Building
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Phone: (709) 729-5009, Fax: (709) 729-2331

World Wide Web site: <http://www.gov.nl.ca/exc/wpo>

This brochure has been published by the Women's Policy Office in consultation with the Department of Education.

We wish to acknowledge the Provincial Association Against Family Violence and others who gave advice on this project.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT/EMOTIONAL ASSAULT/FORCED SEXUAL CONTACT



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR