

## **BULLY PREVENTION 101**

### **Dating Violence**

Yes, dating violence is a form of bullying. Dating violence is very common in teen dating, according to the website **breakthecycle.org**, a comprehensive internet site. This website reports that:

- One in three teens experience verbal or emotional abuse in romantic relationships
- 40% of teenage girls know someone who has been hit by their partner
- Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused by a partner have continued to date the abuser
- 25% of teenage girls have reported being pressured to engage in sexual activity.

Teens may not be able to easily recognize an unhealthy dating relationship for several reasons. The “love cocktail” of endorphins that surges through the body when falling in love leads to a mental state like “temporary insanity.” Also, teens may not have developed enough self-esteem to sense where the boundaries of acceptable/unacceptable behavior should be drawn in dating relationships. Finally, teens may not have seen many appropriate models of healthy loving relationships while growing up.

Some teens hold **erroneous beliefs** about dating relationships, such as:

- They can “reform” their abusive partner with unconditional love
- They should understand and accept bad behavior from a partner who has had a troubled background
- All relationships have ups and downs, and physical and emotional abuse is part of that cycle
- It is better to “blow off steam” than to hold in anger
- It is natural for men to act aggressive.

### **All of these beliefs are wrong.**

Help educate all teens about the facts of dating violence. Checking out **breakthecycle.org** with a teen who is experiencing dating violence is highly recommended. This website is devoted exclusively to breaking the cycle of dating violence and is an excellent resource for teens and parents alike. It contains pages on talking to teens about dating violence, the cycle of violence, building healthy relationships, types of abuse, how to stay safe, and ways that everyone can to advocate in the community and in the legislature for better recognition and support for ending dating violence.

Make sure that your school counseling/health program includes age-appropriate information on dating violence.

#### **Additional Resources**

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: 1-866-331-9474

<http://www.breakthecycle.org/>

<http://www.thesafespace.org/the-basics/relationships-101/about-teen-dating-violence/>