

parent Guide to:

Healthy Teen Relationships





crafted by New Beginnings Social Change Program

New Beginnings is a domestic violence organization with an array of survivor-centered services. Our Social Change Program facilitates healthy relationships groups for middle school students across Seattle and fosters leadership opportunities for middle and high school students. We also provide trainings and consultation to schools, parents and other adult allies. We love what we do!

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We wanted to make some content to share with parents of teens - because preventing dating abuse is only possible when we all work together. Thank you for picking this up!

In here, you will find stats, guiding frameworks, information about teen development, how to spot relationship red flags, and what you can do to support your growing teen.



LET'S GET STARTED!

TABLE OF CONTENTS



3 Why prevention matters

6 Frameworks

12 How do I know if my teen's relationship is unhealthy?

18 What do I do if my teen is in an unhealthy relationship?

23 Promoting healthy relationships

29 Self-Reflection

35 Resources



Frequently Asked Questions

How early is too early to talk about dating?

Kids can start learning concepts and building healthy relationship skills at any age! Even toddlers can practice asking for and giving consent. It's never too early to start equipping your child with tools they can use in all relationships, romantic or not. You can gradually move the conversation from abstract concepts to specifics based on your child's maturity level.

Does talking about dating and consent encourage young people to date and have sex?

The objective truth is that kids have already been exposed to the idea of dating and sex. If they're not talking about it with you, they're hearing about it from TV, movies, books, friends, the Internet, or pretty much anywhere! Talking about dating and consent with them can help cut through the noise and make sure they have the tools to be safe when they do start dating.



When should I allow my teen to date?

There's no one answer to this question, because all kids and families are different! Just keep in mind that strict rules around dating can make it hard for your teen to come to you if their relationship is unhealthy or unsafe.

How can I keep my child safe. while respecting their boundaries and autonomy?

First and foremost, remind them that you're always there to support them and that their safety is more important than any rule. Teach them to recognize relationship red flags and warning signs. Make sure they have access to peer hotlines and other trusted adults in case they aren't ready to talk with you about a problem. Do not violate their privacy (checking messages, etc.) unless you have exhausted all other options.

How do I start the conversation?

The most important thing is demonstrating that you are a safe, open, and supportive person to talk to about relationships!

You can start by mentioning healthy and unhealthy relationship dynamics when you see them on TV or in movies.

> You can also ask open-ended questions about their opinions and viewpoints. Listen actively and keep an open, curious mind.

"What does a healthy relationship look like to you?"

> "What would you do if you felt unsafe?"

"Isn't it creepy to show up outside someone's house with a boombox?"

"How can you tell if someone is trustworthy?"

How do I know if my teen's relationship is unhealthy?

"Do you or your partner ever get jealous?" The best way to find out is to ask your teen how they're feeling about the relationship.

Do they feel they can decide how they spend their time, or do they feel their partner decides for them?

Do they feel they have the right to control where their partner goes and who they talk to? "How does your partner feel about your college plans?"



70% OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ONE STUDY WISH THEY HAD RECEIVED MORE INFO FROM PARENTS ABOUT EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF DATING1

50% OF YOUTH WHO EXPERIENCE RAPE OF PHYSICAL ABUSE WILL ATTEMPT SUICIDE

ONLY 1/3 OF TEENS TOLD

SOMEONE ABOUT THEIR ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP2 1 IN 3 YOUTH WILL BE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP₂

FEWER THAN 5 IN 100 RAPES ARE REPORTED2

NEARLY HALF OF YOUTH HAVE BEEN STALKED BY PARTNERS 3

BIPOC AND LGBTQ+ TEENS ARE AT GREATER RISK₄

HERE'S SOME STATISTICS

MOST WOMEN ARE TEENS WHEN THEY FIRST EXPERIENCE ABUSE 5

PARENTAL SUPPORT IS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR AGAINST TEEN DATING ABUSE 7

ABUSED TEENS ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE SUBSTANCES AND DEVELOP EATING DISORDERS 2

1 Harvard University, https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/reports/the-talk

- ${\small 2} \ {\small Domestic Violence Services Inc., https://www.dvs-or.org/teen-dating-violence-statistics} \\$
- 3 Boston University, https://www.bu.edu/sph/news/articles/2020/nearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-half-of-us-youth-half-of-us-youth-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-have-been-stalked-harassed-by-partners/linearly-half-of-us-youth-
- 4 Fix et al., "Disparities in Adolescent Dating Violence..." https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33678044/
- 5 CDC, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsreportonipv_2022.pdf
- 6 Teen Dating Violence Month, https://www.teendvmonth.org/studies-show-lgbt-youth-face-higher-risk-of-dating-violence/
- 7 US Dept. of Justice, https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/Teen-Dating-Violence
- 8 Jankowiak et al., "The Role of School Social Support..." https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7729437/

89% OF TRANS YOUTH REPORT EXPERIENCING PHYSICAL DATING ABUSE6

POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE MAKES A DIFFERENCE 8

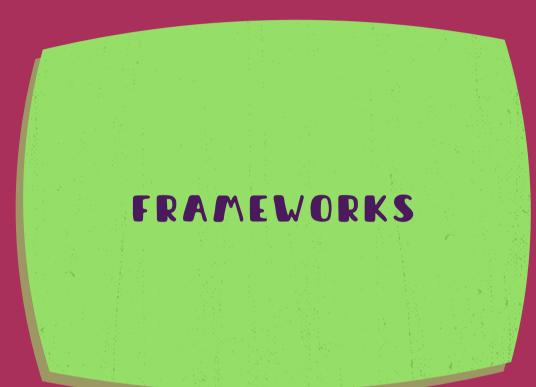
81% OF PARENTS BELIEVE TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IS NOT AN ISSUE 2

WE NEED TO LOOK UNDER THE SURFACE if we want to if we whats prevent whats

MURDER, RAPE, SEXUAL ASSAULT, PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL ABUSE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT

> DISRESPECT OF WOMEN, SEXIST JOKES, UNEQUAL PAY, HARMFUL GENDER STEREOTYPES, SEXIST

LANGUAGE



WHAT IS HARM REDUCTION?

Harm reduction is the idea that we can reduce the potential negative consequences of risky behavior even if we don't eliminate risky behaviors altogether.

It does NOT mean that we're encouraging people to take part in risky behaviors. it just means we're accepting the reality that some people will anyway. It's about meeting people where they are!

Harm reduction is often thought of as a strategy for overcoming substance use disorder. but these ideas can be applied to many other forms of risky behavior.



See how we apply a harm reduction approach to sexting on page 25!

What is adultism?

Adultism is the power that adults have over children and teens. It can impact how we view and treat young people, like assuming adults always know best and that young people do not.

How does it relate to dating abuse?

Adults may unintentionally model and normalize controlling behaviors, such as invading privacy, disregarding boundaries, and dismissing feelings or experiences.

"You're too young to understand." "Because I said so." "It's just a phase. You'll change your mind." "Stop being so dramatic." 8

THE ABCS OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS!



ACCOUNTABILITY

BE RECEPTIVE TO FEEDBACK. REPAIR HARM AND MAKE CHANGES. "I'M SORRY FOR SAYING THAT. WHAT CAN I SAY DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?"



BOUNDARIES

BE FIRM & CLEAR. PRACTICE STATING YOUR NEEDS AND LIMITS. "I NEED TO BE ALONE FOR 10 MINUTES"



CONSENT

WHEN MAKING DECISIONS, ENSURE THAT AGREEMENT IS FREELY GIVEN, REVERSIBLE, INFORMED, ENTHUSIASTIC AND SPECIFIC "CAN I GIVE YOU A HUG?"

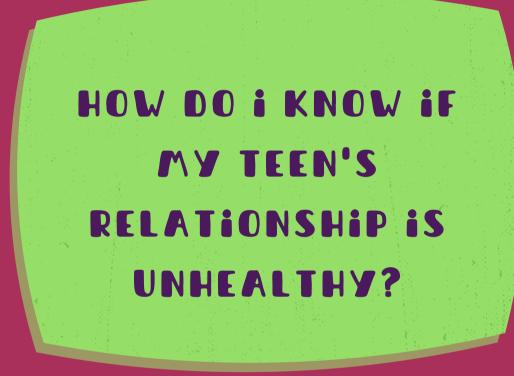


Planned Parenthood*

THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN LEARNS FASTER THAN ANY TIME BESIDES INFANCY

RAISING TEENS CAN FEEL HARD! BUT KEEP IN MIND, THEIR BRAINS ARE WIRED TO ...





Independence

Maintaining other relationships, interests, and personal goals. Respecting privacy and time apart. Freely expressing yourself and what you want to do.

& CONSENT Partners are comforable, enthusiastic and prepared for shared activities. Feeling safe saying, "No." Paying attention to body language. Respecting limits.

Boundaries

Accountability

Being receptive to feedback. Willing to learn and grow. Accepting responsibility for actions. Apologizing for harm and making efforts to repair the relationship.

Support

EQUALITY

& RESPECT

Valuing each other's unique identity, personality, experiences, needs, and strengths. Asking for, providing, and accepting support in a variety of ways.

Enjoyment

It feels good to spend time together. Looking for and bringing out the best in each other. Appreciating the relationship's value in your life.

Trust & Safety

Being yourself. Building trust over time. Feeling safe enough to be open and authentic, even when conflicts arise. Upholding relationship agreements.

Konest Communication

Being truthful and trustworthy. Talking about what each person wants, is comfortable with, curious about, or what's not working.

Balance & Mutuality

Seeing each other as equals regardless of differences. Mutually influencing the relationship's direction. Sharing decision-making. Balance responsibilities fairly.

Isolation

Controlling where a partner goes, what they do, or who they talk to. Limiting involvement with friends, family or activities. Using jealousy to justify their actions.

Stalking & Tracking

Using Privilege & Relationship

Using privilege (age, race, gender) to get their way and control decision (clothes, behavior, relationship status). Using social connections to control or torment their partner.

Sabotage

POWER

& CONTROL

Coercion

Using "Love,"

pressure or threats

staying together).

quilt or manipulating their

activity, pregnancy, drugs,

partner into something (sexual

opportunities, goals or success. Intentionally causing an unwanted pregnancy or loss of a job.

Minimize, Deny, Blame

ring blame to

Belittling

Name calling, putting their partner down, yelling, causing humiliation, embarrassment or shame. Sharing secrets or spreading rumors.

Intimidation & Volatility

(self-harm, leaving) to

Relationship Red Flags

all or most decisions

partners spend all their time together and neglect other relationships

- one or both partners feel like they need to walk on
 - like they need to walk on eggshells
- feeling like they can't be honest about their feelings
- being jealous and distrustful
- 6 using jealousy as an excuse to control who the other spends time with
- looking through the other's private messages without permission

8

9

violent, threatening, or intimidating one partner controlling

being physically

what the other partner wears

10 pressuring the other partner to have sex





Healthy Relationship Quiz

EVERYONE DESERVES TO BE IN A SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP. DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR RELATIONSHIP IS HEALTHY? ANSWER YES OR NO TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO FIND OUT. MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE BOXES TO RECORD YOUR RESPONSES. AT THE END, YOU'LL FIND OUT HOW TO SCORE YOUR ANSWERS.

| THE PERSON I'M WITH | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Is very supportive of things that I do. | 0 | 0 |
| 2. Encourages me to try new things. | 0 | 0 |
| 3. Likes to listen when I have something on my mind. | 0 | 0 |
| 4. Understands that I have my own life too. | 0 | 0 |
| 5. Is not liked very well by my friends. | 0 | 0 |
| 6. Says I'm too involved in different activities. | 0 | 0 |
| 7. Texts me or calls me all the time. | 0 | 0 |
| 8. Thinks I spend too much time trying to look nice. | 0 | 0 |
| 9. Gets extremely jealous or possessive. | 0 | 0 |
| 10. Accuses me of flirting or cheating. | 0 | 0 |
| 11. Constantly checks up on me or makes me check in. | 0 | 0 |
| 12. Controls what I wear or how I look. | 0 | 0 |
| 13. Tries to control what I do and who I see. | 0 | 0 |
| 14. Tries to keep me from seeing or talking to my family and friends. | 0 | 0 |
| 15. Has big mood swings, getting angry and yelling at me one minute but being sweet and apologetic the next. | 0 | 0 |
| 16. Makes me feel nervous or like I'm "walking on eggshells." | 0 | 0 |
| 17. Puts me down, calls me names or criticizes me. | 0 | 0 |
| 18. Makes me feel like I can't do anything right or blames me for problems. | 0 | 0 |
| 19. Makes me feel like no one else would want me. | 0 | 0 |
| 20. Threatens to hurt me, my friends or family. | 0 | 0 |
| 21. Threatens to hurt themselves because of me. | 0 | 0 |
| 22. Threatens to destroy my things (Phone, clothes, laptop, car, etc.). | 0 | 0 |
| 23. Grabs, pushes, shoves, chokes, punches, slaps, holds me down, throws things or hurts me in some way. | 0 | 0 |
| 24. Breaks or throws things to intimidate me. | 0 | 0 |
| 25. Yells, screams or humiliates me in front of other people. | 0 | 0 |
| 26. Pressures or forces me into having sex or going farther than I want to. | 0 | 0 |



Healthy Relationship



GIVE YOURSELF ONE POINT FOR EVERY NO YOU ANSWERED TO NUMBERS 1-4, ONE POINT FOR EVERY YES RESPONSE TO NUMBERS 5-8 AND FIVE POINTS FOR EVERY YES TO NUMBERS 9 AND ABOVE.

NOW THAT YOU'RE FINISHED AND HAVE YOUR SCORE, THE NEXT STEP IS TO FIND OUT WHAT IT MEANS. SIMPLY TAKE YOUR TOTAL SCORE AND SEE WHICH OF THE CATEGORIES BELOW APPLY TO YOU.



You got a score of zero? Don't worry -- it's a good thing! It sounds like your relationship is on a pretty healthy track. Maintaining healthy relationships takes some work -- keep it up! Remember that while you may have a healthy relationship, it's possible that a friend of yours does not. If you know someone who is in an abusive relationship, find out how you can help them by visiting loveisrespect.org.



If you scored one or two points, you might be noticing a couple of things in your relationship that are unhealthy, but it doesn't necessarily mean they are warning signs. It's still a good idea to keep an eye out and make sure there isn't an unhealthy pattern developing.

The best thing to do is to talk to your partner and let them know what you like and don't like. Encourage them to do the same. Remember, communication is always important when building a healthy relationship. It's also good to be informed so you can recognize the different types of abuse.

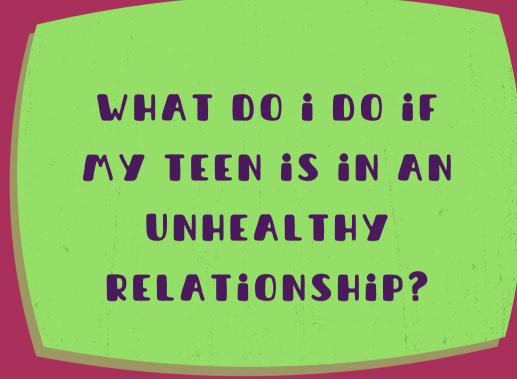


If you scored five or points, you are definitely seeing warning signs and may be in an abusive relationship. Remember the most important thing is your safety — consider making a safety plan. You don't have to deal with this alone. We can help. Chat with a trained peer advocate to learn about your different options at loveisrespect.org.



If you scored five or points, you are definitely seeing warning signs and may be in an abusive relationship. Remember the most important thing is your safety -- consider making a safety plan. You don't have to deal with this alone. We can help. Chat with a trained peer advocate to learn about your different options at loveisrespect.org.





Be a good listener. Believe their experience, even if it's hard to hear.

8

3

Criticize the abusive behaviors, not the abusive partner as a person. Make sure your teen knows you don't just "have it out for" their partner.

Make sure they know they can always

come to you for support.

Don't give ultimatums. Banning your teen from seeing their partner might further isolate them from you and make them feel like they can't come to you for help.

Reach out for help.

National Teen Dating Violence Hotline: 1.800.799.7233 Live chat at www.loveisrespect.org

Safety Planning

STAYING SAFE AT SCHOOL:

- The safest way for me to get to and from school is: _____
- If I need to leave in an emergency, I can get home by: _____
- I can make sure that a friend can walk with me between class. I will ask: _____
- I will eat lunch in an area where there are school staff nearby. These are some areas where I feel safe: _____
- I could talk to the following people if I need to rearrange my schedule or if I need help staying safe at school: Principal, Coach _____, Teachers: _____ School Counselor

STAYING SAFE AT HOME:

- I can tell this family member about what is going on in my relationship:
- There may be times when no one is home. During those times, I can have people stay with me like: _____
- The safest way for me to leave home in an emergency is: _____
- If I have to leave in an emergency, I should try to go to a place that is public, safe, and unknown by my abuser. I could go here: _____
 - I will use a code word so I can alert my family, friends, and neighbors to call for help without my abuser knowing about it. My code word is: _____

Notes :

Notes:



Safety Planning

STAYING SAFE EMOTIONALLY: GETTING HELP IN MY COMMUNITY: For emergencies: 911 My abuser often tries to make me feel bad about myself by saying/doing this: National Teen Dating Violence Hotline: 1-866-331-9474 When they do this, I will think of these Local police station: _____ things I like about myself:_____ Local domestic violence organization: I will do things I enjoy, like: _____ Local free legal assistance: I will join clubs or organizations that Nearest youth shelter: _____ interest me, like: _____ or _____ Notes: Notes:

THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP KEEP TI

fety Planning

MYSELF SAFE EVERY DAY:

- Carry my cell phone and important telephone numbers with me at all times
 - Keep in touch with someone I trust about where I am or what I'm doing
 - Stay out of isolated places and try to never walk around alone
 - Avoid places where my abuser or their friends and family are likely to be
 - Keep the doors and windows locked when I am home, especially if I'm alone
 - Avoid speaking to my abuser. If it is unavoidable, I will make sure there are people around in case the situation becomes dangerous
 - Call 911 if I feel my safety is at risk
 - Look into getting a protective order so that I'll have legal support in keeping my abuser away
 - Remember that the abuse is not my fault and that I deserve a safe and healthy relationship

THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP KEEP MYSELF SAFE SOCIALLY:

- Ask my friends to keep their cell phones with them while they are with me in case we get separated and I need help
- Go to different malls, banks, grocery stores, movie theaters, etc than the ones my abuser goes to or knows about
- Not go out alone, especially at night
- Be aware of how to leave safely in case of an emergency
- Leave if I feel uncomfortable in a situation, no matter what my friends are doing
- Spend time with people who make me feel safe, supported, and good about myself

THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP KEEP MYSELF SAFE ONLINE:

- If the abuse and harassment does not stop, I will change my usernames, email, and phone number
- Set all my online profiles to be as private as they can be. Never give my password to anyone other than my parent/guardian
- Save and keep track of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments, posts, or texts
 - Not answer any unknown, blocked, or private numbers. Not communicate with my abuser if unnecessary, since any form of communication can be recorded



Safety planning guide adapted from loveisrespect.org



Unfortunately, the media normalizes a lot of unhealthy relationship dynamics! Start the conversation about healthy relationships by filling out this bingo card with your teen while watching TV or movies.

MEDIA BINGO Oh dang! Are the characters in your favorite series, movie or song in unhealthy relationships?



ZS.

SAFER SEXTING

Why do we take a harm reduction approach to sexting?

Data consistently shows that abstinence-only sex education doesn't work. Neither do abstinence-only messages around sexting. In fact, sexting among teens is increasing with nearly 1 in 7 teens reporting that they have sent a sext and 1 in 4 reporting that they have received a sext.

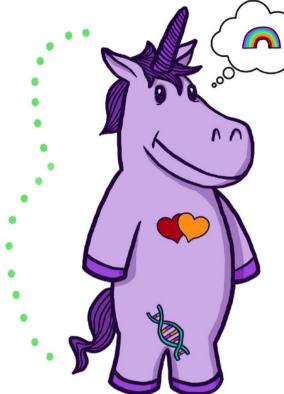
The potential negative consequences of sexting are HUGE. Not only can a nude photo be shared indefinitely without consent, but minors could end up in serious legal trouble. Your teen should understand these real risks. And parents should understand the real and valid reasons why teens want to sext in the first place!

Shaming teens or focusing only on the negative consequences could leave them without the tools they need to navigate the situation if they do end up sending or receiving a sext. They may even be afraid they will be arrested if they reach out for support!

Why do you think How do you know you people sext? can trust someone What would you do if with your private someone sent you an ASK unsolicited nude? How would you feel? It's normal to explore your sexuality as a teenager. How can you How would you go about setting a boundary with do that safely? someone you really really liked? 25

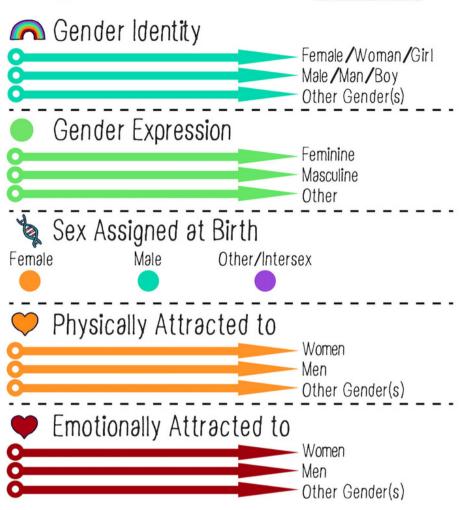
The Gender Unicorn





To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore



how does your teen identify?



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR LGBTQ TEEN

According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQ young adults who report high levels of parental rejection are eight times more likely to report attempting suicide and six times more likely to report high levels of depression

BUT...

LGBTQ youth who feel high social support from their family report attempting suicide at less than half the rate of those who feel low or moderate social support

- **1.** Don't pressure them to come out
- 2. When they do come out, validate their feelings and affirm their identity
- 3. Let them choose how to describe their sexuality and gender
- 4. Make sure they're safe from bullying and harassment
- 5. Find community groups in your area
- 6. Educate yourself about queer intimacy so you can alter your "sex talk"
- 7. Connect them with gender-affirming care if they want to pursue it

- MODELING HEALTHY MASCULINITY



Demonstrate vulnerability - show affection

Be accountable and repair harms

Discuss what your teen sees in media

Model consent, and practice handling rejections and disappointment

Challenge stereotypes and discuss sexism



REFLECTIONS

boundaries important to me:

boundaries important to my teen:

What dating advice could I have used as a teen?

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WHAT FEARS DO I HAVE ABOUT MY TEEN DATING? HOW CAN I TALK WITH THEM SO THEY CAN DATE SAFELY?

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IF YOUR TEEN IS GETTING ON YOUR LAST NERVE...

Check in with yourself... What is coming up for you?

What common ground do you and your teen have? What do you both want in this situation?



RESOURCES

New Beginnings Teen Portal teen.newbegin.org

> DVHopeline dvhopeline.org 206.737.0242

One Love JoinOneLove.org

Love Is Respect LoveIsRespect.org 1.866.331.9474 or text LOVEIS to 22522 Create a safety plan at: loveisrespect.org/personal-safety/create-a-safety-plan

Teen Link

TeenLink.org 1.866.833.6546

That's Not Cool ThatsNotCool.com

RESOURCES

National Teen Dating Violence Hotline 1.800.799.7233

National Domestic Violence Hotline TheHotline.org 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)

Northwest Network of Bisexual. Trans. Lesbian. & Gay Survivors of Abuse NWNetwork.org 206.568.7777

> Lifewire 24-hour helpline 425.746.1940 1.800.827.8840

> > Scarleteen scarleteen.com

> > > Amaze

amaze.org



newbegin.org teen.newbegin.org

24-hour DVHopeline: 206.737.0242





Email: info@newbegin.org

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