



## February is National Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Month

Recognizing abuse in a relationship can be difficult, especially for teens. The patterns of abuse can be the same as for adults – physical, emotional, and sexual. It is mostly about power and control. Violent behavior often begins between the ages of 12 and 18. Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence, almost triple the national average. The severity of intimate partner violence is often greater in cases where the pattern of abuse was established in adolescence. Violent relationships in adolescence can have serious long-term consequences by putting the victims at higher risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and further domestic violence.

Adults, let's teach our children and teens to respect themselves, and to respect their friends. If you are a young person in a relationship now – even just hanging out together – ask yourself these questions: Is the person I am with supportive of things I like to do, or do they say I'm wasting my time? Do they listen to what is on my mind, or do they try to convince me to see things their way? Do they text or call me all the time, asking what I'm doing or who I'm with?

Here are a few cool websites about relationships – check them out!

[www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org)

[www.thatsnotcool.org](http://www.thatsnotcool.org)

[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)