



**Chapter 3:  
Healthy  
Relationships**

# Relationship Violence

## When Love Turns Dangerous

**Ambulance/Emergency  
9-11**

**Youth Against Violence  
24 Hour Helpline:**

1-800-680-4264

**Kids Help Line (24 hrs)**

1-800-668-6868

**Youth in BC Live Chat:**

[www.youthinbc.com](http://www.youthinbc.com)

**Women’s Resource  
Centre of the Fraser  
Valley (Mission)**

(604) 820-8455

[www.wrsfv.ca](http://www.wrsfv.ca)

**Abbotsford Community  
Services Abuse  
Counselling**

(604) 859-7681

**Ridge Meadows  
Women’s Centre**

(604) 460-0064

**Ministry of Children and  
Family Development**

*To Report Suspected Child  
Abuse call: 310-1234*

*(no area code needed)*



When 15 year old Ali started dating Jordan, she thought she was the luckiest girl in the world. Jordan was good looking, popular, and treated her like a queen. Within a few weeks of dating, Jordan started getting uncomfortable when Ali went out with her girlfriends or spent time with her family. He said that since she was dating him, she should be available to spend time with him whenever he wanted her to. Jordan called Ali several times a day to find out who she was with and what she was doing. Ali was flattered Jordan cared so much about her, but didn’t like how he made her feel guilty for wanting to spend time with her friends. At a party, Jordan accused Ali of flirting with his friend, and slapped her. Afterward, he told her he was very sorry and it would never happen again. He never hit her again, but he often called her names, sometimes in front of his friends. He encouraged her to drink alcohol, which was out of character for Ali, and pressured her to have sex with him, even though she didn’t really feel ready. Ali’s friends noticed how sad she looked, and asked her if Jordan was abusive to her. He hadn’t slapped her since that one time, so Ali said no. She didn’t realize that there are lots of things that can make a relationship abusive and unhealthy besides physical abuse.

Would you know what to do if you were in a relationship where you weren’t being treated properly? What if your friend was being abused? Dating violence can encompass many different forms of abuse, including physical violence, sexual assault, verbal harassment or emotional abuse.

**About 1 in 3 high school students have been in, or will be in an abusive relationship. That’s too many! Learn the facts to help prevent and stop relationship violence.**

Although women and men of any age can be victims of relationship violence, teenage girls are the most at-risk group for several reasons:

- Pressure from peers to be in a relationship.
- A romanticized view of relationships.
- Craving independence from parents.
- May feel they are responsible for solving relationship problems or for “changing” the abusive partner.
- Young men may believe they need to act aggressively toward their girlfriends so that others perceive them as “manly” and in control.
- Some women are vulnerable to abuse because they have been raised believing women should be passive and must put a man’s needs before their own.



## WARNING SIGNS YOUR PARTNER OR FRIEND MAY BECOME ABUSIVE

### He/She might exhibit:

- Extreme jealousy and controlling behavior (eg. telling you what to wear, who to hang out with, etc.)
- Low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy (not being “good enough”)
- Alcohol and drug use
- Blaming others for his or her problems
- Is verbally abusive or threatens you with violence
- A history of abusing others in the past
- A desire to isolate you from friends and family (eg. making you feel guilty for spending time with them)
- Explosive anger/use of force during arguments
- Frequent mood swings/bad temper

---

### TYPES OF ABUSE:

**Physical Abuse:** Involves the use of force, and might include choking, hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, pushing, using a weapon, or restraining.

**Sexual Abuse:** Occurs with any unwanted sexual behaviour. This includes touching (over and under clothes), kissing, rubbing, caressing, oral sex and sexual assault (rape). Even if you have engaged in consensual sexual behavior in the past, sexual abuse can still happen when one partner says no.

**Emotional or Verbal Abuse:** Is the hardest type of abuse to identify. It might include threatening, insulting, humiliating, blaming, yelling, pressuring, or isolating, among many other possible examples.

**Controlling someone through emotional abuse is often the beginning of relationship violence, and often escalates into physical or sexual abuse.**

It is important to understand that to someone who is abusive, nothing exists outside of themselves. To lose control over their partner is like losing control over their own life, which terrifies and angers them. Abuse is about power and control and no one deserves to be abused. Any of the abusive acts mentioned above could result in charges under the Criminal Code of Canada.

---

### WHAT ARE SOME COMMON FEELINGS FOR AN ABUSED PARTNER TO HAVE?

- Emotionally numb (not feeling anything)
- Afraid of your partner
- Helpless (like there is nowhere to go for help)
- Might fantasize ways to get your partner out of your life
- Inadequate (feeling you can't do anything right for your partner)
- Avoiding topics so you don't anger your partner
- Feeling badly about yourself like you deserve to get hurt, or that you are the “crazy” or “bad” one.
- Lost love and respect for your partner that you used to have
- Humiliation, Shame, Denial, Guilt or Doubt (feeling unsure of everything)

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?



### EMOTIONAL or VERBAL ABUSE

Your boyfriend/girlfriend/friend might:

- Make you feel guilty all the time
- Force you to do things you aren't comfortable doing
- Act possessive or jealous of you
- Not take “no” for an answer
- Put down your ideas, appearance, friends, etc.
- Not like it when you spend time with friends or family
- Call you degrading things and hurt your feelings
- Insist you don't go places without him or her and/or make all the decisions in the relationship
- Refuse to accept it when you tell them you want to break up
- Refuse to discuss feelings then blow up at you
- Drive fast or do other things to scare you, like threaten people you love or your pets
- Accuse you of lying or embarrass you
- Ignore you or put down your contributions
- Blame you for his/her violent behavior

### PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE:

Your boyfriend/girlfriend/friend might:

- Push, shove, burn, choke or otherwise physically hurt you.
- Coerce (manipulate) you into doing certain sexual acts or force you into any sexual activity when you say No, refuse to use protection when you ask them to, or force you to watch pornography.
- Have sex with you when you are passed out or unconscious, or feed you alcohol or drugs so that you will have sex with them.



**DATE AND ACQUAINTANCE RAPE:**

As kids, we were taught to be wary of strangers. But up to 80% of rape victims know their rapist. Sometimes people we think we know well can hurt us the most.

*What is Acquaintance Rape?*

The use of physical force, emotional bargaining, blackmail or mind games to force any type of sexual contact (intercourse, kissing, fondling, etc.). When forced sex happens between people who already know each other, that's acquaintance rape.

**Remember: If it's against your will, it's against the law.**

Remember that rape is rape, no matter who the person is whether a friend, acquaintance or a partner. Rape is about power and control where one person's needs are being met at the expense of another. This can happen in heterosexual relationships as well as in same sex relationships. It's important to remember that it's about power and control over another person. There are some social pressures that give the impression that sex is a commodity (payment) for certain things like paying for a date, being nice, or a nice date. Your body is yours and yours alone, it is not payment for a dinner.

If you are the victim of date rape, IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT even though you might be tempted to blame yourself. Don't feel guilty. Dressing or talking sexy doesn't give anyone the right to assault you. No means No. Don't be ashamed to tell someone you were raped—speaking up might mean preventing the same thing from happening to someone else down the road.

Unfortunately, even with every precaution, acquaintance rapes can still happen. If you are injured, go straight to the emergency room. Call a friend or family member you trust and tell them what happened. To report the rape, call the police right away. Preserve all physical evidence—don't change your clothes and don't wash. Write down as much as you remember about the event. If you're not sure what to do, call a crisis line, like the ones listed on the first page of this article. Rape can be emotionally traumatic, so make sure you talk about your feelings with a counselor, doctor or a friend you trust.

**IF YOU ARE BEING ABUSED BY A FAMILY MEMBER OR A FAMILY FRIEND**

If you are being abused physically, sexually, verbally or emotionally by *anyone* you know, you need to speak up to someone you trust. Talk to your **Big Brother/Big Sister**, teacher, doctor, parent or a family friend you know has your best interests at heart. He or she will help you plan what to do next. Lots of girls and guys who are abused by a person in a position of trust (eg. family friend, teacher, grandparent, uncle) are afraid to speak up because they fear no one will believe them, they are scared they will ruin their relationship with that person, or their abuser has made them feel guilty, ashamed, or scared to tell. Sometimes an abuser might threaten to hurt you or someone you love if you tell, or they will say other people will think badly of you if they find out. Realize they are telling you these things because they are scared of getting caught. **Tell someone you trust right away to take the power away from them and put yourself in control! If people do not believe you, continue telling people until you are believed. You deserve to be safe and protected from harm.**



**TIPS FOR SAFER DATING**

- Trust your instincts.
- Have a Safety Plan: Tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back.
- Pay your own way; avoid obligation.
- Be Prepared: Bring money for a phonecall (or your cell) and emergency taxi fare. Know of a friend who will be home in case you need a ride home (like if your date drinks) and always have a back-up plan.
- Meet in public for the first few dates.
- Be Assertive; Leave if you feel uncomfortable.
- Give clear messages to your date and avoid unsafe situations. Try not to go off alone with your date. Never leave your drink unattended.
- Keep in touch with family and friends, even if you are in a long-term dating situation.
- You can try your hardest to keep yourself safe from abuse, but you may not always be able to prevent it from happening. Remember that if you are assaulted, it is **not** your fault and you deserve to ask for help. Tell someone you trust immediately and report a rape or physical assault to the police.



**HOW CAN I TELL IF MY FRIEND IS A VICTIM OF RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE?**

**Some warning signs may include:**

- Physical signs of injury (bruises, black eyes, etc.)
- Changes in mood or personality. Might seem sad, nervous or withdrawn
- Is nervous to speak when their partner is around
- Truancy from school, failing grades
- Isolation/drawing away from family and friends. (eg. making excuses why she can't see you)
- Starting to use drugs and alcohol more frequently
- Makes excuses for partner's behavior or blaming self

If you think someone you care about is being abused, tell someone you trust, like a teacher, parent, friend's parent, or your **Big Brother/Big Sister**.



**HOW BIG BROTHERS/BIG SISTERS CAN HELP THEIR LITTLE:**

**IF YOU THINK YOUR LITTLE IS IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP:**

- **Tell your Mentoring Coordinator immediately.** If your Little makes a disclosure to you, thank him or her for trusting you enough to tell you, and assure them you will help them resolve the problem. Don't promise to keep it a secret.
- Foster self-esteem, assertiveness and self-respect in your Little through discussions, activities and being a positive role model.

**IF YOUR LITTLE KNOWS SOMEONE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP:**

- **Tell your Mentoring Coordinator immediately about any disclosure.**
- If it is a friend from school, suggest your Little talk to a teacher they trust about their concern.
- Acknowledge your Little's concern for their friend or family member and don't take it lightly. Use this opportunity to ask your Little what he or she would do in that or a similar situation.

**TRUTHS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE:**

- ◆ **Jealousy is a controlling and destructive emotion. It is a myth to think that jealousy is a sign of love.** When someone constantly accuses their partner of flirting or cheating, he or she is possessive and controlling, not loving. Jealousy is the most common reason for assaults in relationships.
- ◆ **It is a myth to think that women who get hit or raped must have deserved it or asked for it in some way.** No one deserves to be hit or raped. We all have the right to be safe and live violence free. Violence in any form (emotional, physical and sexual) is always wrong.
- ◆ **If you feel abused or controlled in your relationship, it is unlikely that things will change for the better, even if you are patient.** Once a relationship becomes violent, it usually gets worse without intervention. Abusive partners are stuck in a pattern, and are unlikely to spontaneously change.
- ◆ **Name-calling and hurtful words are a form of violence; it is a myth to think that name-calling doesn't hurt anyone.** Verbal abuse and name-calling is a very dangerous and harmful type of abuse that can shatter the victim's self-esteem.
- ◆ **Relationship violence, physical or sexual assault could happen to anyone and might happen by someone you love and trust.** Relationship violence is not limited to any social class or race. Anyone can be a victim of relationship violence.
- ◆ **Relationship violence is not limited to heterosexual romantic relationships.** It occurs equally in heterosexual and same sex relationships. It is also common to experience relationship violence in friendships. Any type of violence in any type of relationship is harmful and wrong.

**Resources**

Available from the Fraser Valley Regional Library

**For LITTLES (6-12)**

- *Catie the Caterpillar: A Story to Help Break the Silence of Sexual Abuse.* Tracy M. Schamburg. Liguori, 2006. (Christian perspective)
- *Your Body Belongs to You.* Cornelia Maude Spelman. Albert Whitman, 1997.

**For TEENS (13-17)**

- *In Love and Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships.* Barrie Levy. CA: Seal Press, 2006.

**For PARENTS/BIG BROTHERS/SISTERS**

- *Saving Beauty from the Beast.* Vicki Crompton and Ellen Zelda Kessner. Little, Brown, 2003.
- *But I Love Him: Protecting Your Teenage Daughter From Controlling, Abusive Dating Relationships.* Jill Murray. NY: ReganBooks, 2000.



**Can Guys be Victims of Relationship Violence?**

Absolutely. Most guys don't report an assault, because they are ashamed or embarrassed. They might also be worried no one will take them seriously. Statistics Canada reported that cases of men reporting domestic abuse rose by 40% between 1995 and 2001. One possible reason for the increase is because of increased awareness; men are becoming more comfortable admitting if they have been abused by a woman. Men who are physically, sexually or verbally/emotionally abused are not alone, and there are lots of resources out there to connect with people going through the same thing. Most people don't realize that men can also be sexually assaulted, whether by another male or by a female. It is a myth that men *always* want sex—No means No for guys as well as girls.

[www.batteredmen.com](http://www.batteredmen.com)

[www.heart-to-heart.ca/men](http://www.heart-to-heart.ca/men)

**Thank you to the following members of our Panel for Reviewing this Article: Cecilia Codoceo, RSW**