

EDUCATOR SHEETS



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MICHIGAN
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
PREVENTION &
TREATMENT BOARD

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR AN IDEAL DATING PARTNER

OBJECTIVE

To help students identify what characteristics they would like in a person they might consider dating. Using the questions below as a guide, ask students to come up with a job description for their ideal dating partner. As students call out different traits record them on a flip chart.

QUESTIONS

- How does the person act at school or at work?
- How does the person act when you are alone with him/her?
- How does she/he show happiness?
- How does this person communicate with you in private, in front of friends, on the phone and in e-mail?
- How does this person talk about female and male roles, relationships, their family, etc.?
- How does she/he resolve differences? Conflict?
- How do you feel about yourself when you're with this person?
- What do your parents think of your potential dating partner?

Using their suggestions, ask students to write 10 interview questions to use with prospective dating partners. Allow about 10-15 minutes for them to complete their questions. Once the students have developed their questions, ask them to return to the larger group to share.

Ask someone to volunteer to share their questions with the group or have the students exchange their questions with each other.

Have a discussion about this exercise based on the following questions:

- What did you learn from this exercise?
- How realistic is it to interview a potential dating partner?
- How would you answer your own questions?
- What kind of subtle indicators would you look for in determining if someone is abusive?
- How else can you learn about a potential dating partner?

Exercise adapted from 'Healthy Relationships' dating violence curriculum from the Center for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence, Seattle, Washington.



1. WHAT IS DATING VIOLENCE?

Dating violence is a **pattern** of assaultive and controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power in the relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in ways that cause fear, degradation and humiliation in order to control the other person. Forms of abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional and psychological.

As you discuss this definition emphasize the abuser's **goal** of getting and keeping power and control, the abuser's **intentional** use of controlling behaviors, and the abuser's **choice** to engage in this type of behavior.

2. WHY DO YOU THINK ABUSE OCCURS IN SOME TEENAGE DATING RELATIONSHIPS?

Abuse occurs in a dating relationship because the abuser has a sense of entitlement i.e., they believe they have the right to behave this way, that they are entitled to all of their partner's attention, affection, loyalty and time. Because of this sense of entitlement the abuser makes the **choice** to engage in this type of behavior. There is a misconception that alcohol, other drugs, anger or stress cause dating violence because these factors often accompany the violence. While these outside characteristics are a contributing factor to the abuse (e.g. when present, the abuse may escalate in severity and frequency), they do not cause someone to use violence against another person. The reason abusers make the choice to use violence is because:

THEY CAN

IT WORKS

THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND SELF INTEREST

3. WHY MIGHT IT BE DIFFICULT FOR VICTIMS TO LEAVE AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Leaving an abusive relationship can be very dangerous for teen victims. Frequently when a victim attempts to leave or does leave, the abuser will escalate their behaviors of control, threaten to kill the victim, the victim's family or friends or may threaten suicide. It is usually after the victim has left that the abuser may commit a homicide, suicide or both. Other barriers for a teen victim to overcome may include: the teen feels isolated; the teen may have stopped spending time with friends and family; the teen may be fearful to disclose the abuse to adults; the teen may feel responsible for the abuse, and therefore believes she can stop it, and the teen may still care for the abuser and therefore believe that she can help him.

4. HOW MAY ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS CONTRIBUTE TO AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Once again, the willingness to resort to abuse is a choice made by the abuser. Drugs can be an excuse to avoid putting responsibility for the violence where it belongs—on the abuser. It is important to note that the use of alcohol and other drugs can escalate the frequency and severity of abuse. Some victims may use alcohol or other drugs as a way to cope with the violence they are experiencing.

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5. WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual assault is forcing or coercing an individual to engage in any non-consensual sexual contact or sexual penetration. In Michigan, the law regarding rape and sexual assault is called the Criminal Sexual Conduct Act (CSC). It is gender neutral and includes marital, stranger, date and acquaintance rape as well as child sexual assault.

6. HOW CAN A COUPLE WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE DECISIONS IN A RELATIONSHIP?

Both individuals should agree upon decisions made in a relationship. Therefore it is important to listen to each other and to communicate in a non-threatening, respectful and fair manner when negotiating for a solution which will work for both people.

7. HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN HURT IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP?

It's important for you to understand why you are interested in helping the individual. If you're working on your own agenda (e.g. you think the victim should leave the abuser and you plan to say this), beware. When you tell the victim what they should do, you're acting just like the abuser, making decisions for the teen victim.

To help a victim of dating violence you must remember they're not responsible for the abuse. Listen to her in a non-judgmental manner, offer available resources, be supportive and let them know they're not to blame for the abuse (see handout, Helping a Friend Who is Surviving a Violent Relationship).

8. LIST WAYS TO HOLD ABUSERS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR.

Speak out when you see or hear about abuse. Don't make excuses for the abusive behaviors. Stop abusers when they begin to make excuses or blame others for their behavior. Tell them that using abuse is their choice and that they need to get help to change this behavior. Offer to help them find someone to talk to about their abusive behavior. Let abusers know that you have zero tolerance for abuse in relationships.

9. WHAT ARE SOME REASONS THAT WOULD MAKE TEENS IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS FEEL RELUCTANT ABOUT REPORTING DATING VIOLENCE?

They may feel that others will not take them seriously if they disclose. They may not have told anyone about their sexual orientation and fear being "outed." They may think that abuse doesn't happen in gay/lesbian relationships and that what is happening to them is an aberration.



1. VIOLENCE RARELY HAPPENS IN TEENAGE DATING RELATIONSHIPS.**FALSE**

Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

("Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy and Suicidality," Journal of American Medicine, Vol. 286, No. 5, August 1, 2002)

Twenty-five to thirty-three percent of adolescent abusers reported that their violence served to "intimidate," "frighten," or "force the other person to give me something."

(Brustin S., "Legal Response to Teen Dating Violence", Family Law Quarterly, Vol. 29 No. 2, p.335, Summer 1995)

(See additional facts on the Dating Violence Fact Sheet.)

2. GIRLS WHO STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS HAVE NO ONE TO BLAME BUT THEMSELVES. FALSE

It is the person that is using abusive behavior who is **responsible** for the abuse and for instilling fear in the teen victim. It is difficult for teens to leave abusive relationships for various reasons; **fear** of the abuser's threats is usually the #1 reason, lack of social support, or fear that nothing will happen to the abuser. To end abuse in teen relationships, abusers must be held responsible for their behavior and possess a willingness to change.

3. DATING VIOLENCE HAPPENS MOSTLY TO FEMALES.**TRUE**

Young women between the ages of 16-24 are the most vulnerable to intimate partner violence.

(Intimate Partner Violence, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, May 2000, NCJ 178247).

Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.

("Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality," Journal of American Medicine, Vol. 286, No. 5, August 1, 2001).

Violence against women occurs in 20% of dating couples.

(American Psychological Association, Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family, 1996).

4. DATING VIOLENCE IS ONLY PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.**FALSE**

Dating violence is a **pattern** of assaultive and controlling behaviors that one person uses against another in order to gain or maintain power in the relationship. The abuser intentionally behaves in ways that cause fear, degradation and humiliation to control the other person. Forms of abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional and psychological.

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE FOR DATING VIOLENCE STUDENT SURVEY

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

5. USING ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS IS A CAUSE OF DATING VIOLENCE. **FALSE**

For abusers who use alcohol or other drugs, these influences are often used as excuses to justify their use of violence. The cause of dating violence is the abuser making the choice to engage in this behavior.

6. IF THE POLICE ARE CALLED WHEN DATING VIOLENCE IS COMMITTED, THE VICTIM HAS TO PRESS CHARGES FOR AN ARREST TO OCCUR. **FALSE**

As of April 1, 2002, an arrest for dating violence is handled like an arrest for domestic violence. If the police believe that an assault has occurred (based on the individuals' statements, possible witnesses, demeanor of one or both parties, any property destruction, etc.) they can make a warrantless arrest of the abuser. That means that the victim does not have to press charges against the abuser.

7. DATING VIOLENCE HAPPENS MOSTLY TO TEENAGERS WHO PROVOKE IT. **FALSE**

Abusers of dating violence make decisions about when they will abuse, how frequently they'll abuse, what the severity will be, and where the abuse will take place. This decision making process has nothing to do with the teen victim's actions or behavior.

8. TEENAGERS WILL FREQUENTLY TELL SOMEONE ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE WHEN IT HAPPENS TO THEM. **FALSE**

Teenagers are usually reluctant to disclose they are a victim of abuse to adults because:

- Resources may be unavailable to teens without parental involvement.
- They may not trust adults.
- They may fear losing autonomy or independence.
- They may feel they might get into trouble if they were doing something illegal like smoking pot, being at a rave party, or drinking alcohol when the abuse occurred.
- They may fear the abuser will retaliate against them.
- They may feel no one will believe them.
- They may feel others will blame them.
- They may believe they can stop the abuse.
- They may fear reaction of parents.
- They may feel that even if they are believed, there will be a stigma attached to being a victim. Teens don't want this type of attention.
- They may fear being "outed" if they are in a same-sex relationship.

If teenagers disclose to anyone, it's likely to be to a friend.

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Use these questions alone or in combination to generate a facilitated discussion on dating violence with the entire class or with gender-specific groups.

OBJECTIVE: To increase student awareness and understanding of dating violence.

1. WHAT CHARACTERISTICS WOULD YOU EXPECT TO FIND IN A RELATIONSHIP BASED ON EQUALITY?

Use your copy of the handout *Battering/Abusive Relationships vs. Relationships Based on Equality* to get the discussion going. Then hand out student copies to explore the issue more deeply.

2. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE AN ABUSIVE TEEN RELATIONSHIP? WHY?

Use your copy of the handouts *Battering/Abusive Relationships vs. Relationships Based on Equality* and *Identifying Abusive Behaviors in Dating Relationships* to get the discussion going, then hand out copies to students to explore the issue further.

3. HOW COULD YOU APPROACH SOMEONE WHO IS ABUSING A PERSON IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP?

Use your copy of the handout *Teens Talking to Teens Who Are Abusive* to start the discussion. Then hand out student copies to prompt further exploration of the topic.

4. WHY WOULD A TEEN BE RELUCTANT TO TELL ANYONE THAT SHE/HE IS A VICTIM OF DATING VIOLENCE?

Consider these points to guide the discussion:

- Resources may be unavailable to teens without parental involvement.
- They may not trust adults.
- They may feel they might get into trouble if they were doing something illegal like smoking pot, being at a rave party or drinking alcohol when the abuse occurred.
- They may not see themselves as a victim.
- They may feel no one will believe them.
- They may feel that even if they are believed, there will be a stigma attached to being a victim.
- They may feel responsible for the abuse.
- They may feel others will blame them.
- They may believe they can stop the abuse.
- They may fear being “outed” if they are in a same-sex relationship.
- They may be fearful of losing some independence if they disclose abuse to a parent.
- They may believe that they can handle the situation.
- They may fear retaliation from the abuser.
- They may feel ashamed, embarrassed and isolated.
- They may hope the abuse will end.

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5. HOW DO SEX-ROLE EXPECTATIONS FOR FEMALE AND MALE TEENS CREATE BARRIERS TO AN EQUALITY-BASED RELATIONSHIP? HOW DO YOU RESIST THIS TYPE OF STEREOTYPING?

Ask students to consider the role of the media (especially music videos, magazine ads, movies, and television programs). How do these mediums present females? How do they present males?

Ask students if they notice examples of sex-role stereotyping in their peer groups.

Ask how they personally resist this type of stereotyping.

6. WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT DO TO SUPPORT A VICTIM OF DATING VIOLENCE?

Use your copy of the handout *Helping a Friend Who is Surviving a Violent Relationship* to start the discussion. Then hand out student copies to prompt additional exploration of the topic.

