

TRUSTED HIM

THE TRUE STORY OF
ANNA LYNN HURD

JENNIFER SMITH & CHERRY TIGRIS

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JENNIFER SMITH

Jennifer Smith is more than just the mother of murdered 16 year-old, Anna Lynn Hurd. She is a crusader for anyone who has suffered at the hands of a parent or intimate partner. Having come from a childhood of abuse herself, Jennifer Smith strived to be the parent she never had growing up. Leaving her hometown of St. Paul, Minnesota for Texas, Jennifer Smith was a single mother with the world on her shoulders. Committed to breaking the cycle of domestic violence that had played out in her own childhood and young adult years, she set out to make a new future for herself and for her children. The unfortunate events that led to her daughter's death would serve as the foundation for what she calls her true purpose in life. Helping other parents and teens with awareness about domestic violence as it relates to teen dating is her sole mission in writing the book and in continuing her own journey toward peace and understanding.

CHERRY TIGRIS

Cherry Tigris was born on the West Coast and adopted into the East Coast elite during a time when fluorescent leggings were the norm and Tower Records was the only place you could buy music, Cherry Tigris is not one to mince words. She has taken it upon herself to be an advocate for child abuse survivors and a sounding board for social change as it relates to the statute of limitations surrounding child abuse cases. Currently invited to co-author, "I Trusted Him: The True Story of Anna Lynn Hurd," Cherry Tigris has expanded her advocacy efforts to the warning signs of Teen Dating Violence. Readers will find themselves caught in the perfect storm of circumstances brought on by young teenage love gone wrong and a society that refuses to hold anyone accountable for anything anymore. You don't want to miss this thought-provoking book about character and the potential for true crime that resides in any toxic relationship, no matter how common they are becoming these days.

She is also the author of the snarky memoir, "Toilet Paper People." Her edgy and thought-provoking autobiographical account of triumph in the face of child abuse is capturing the hearts and spines of humans everywhere because of her unwavering attitude and true grit. Cherry Tigris builds armies of dolls out of toilet paper in order to distract herself from beatings and neglect at the hands of her mentally ill adoptive mother. What could have been a sad story about child abuse becomes a miraculous story about survival that is wowing every life it touches.



FOREWORD

Paradise Publishers is delighted to have been part of the process in bringing Anna's story to digital print. We believe if she were here today, Anna would be proud to see the support and awareness her story is bringing to facts surrounding dating and domestic violence.

As an independent publisher we are blessed and fortunate to have been able to work with authors Jennifer Smith and Cherry Tigris to tell Anna's story. During the process there were hundreds of discussions, debates, and interviews which were at times shocking, revealing, heart-rending, yet enlightening.

As a team we've worked hard to make sure that the story you are about to read is presented with dignity, forcing us to stop and think about the people in and around our lives today. Are you missing something so simple that it could change someone's life? Even save someone's life?

The sad reality is that no one really wants to get involved. As the saying goes, hindsight is perfect vision; we only see the truth after the fact. There is always that one person who says that they saw it coming. What we would like to say is:

"If you can say you saw it coming, then the important question is: why didn't you do something about it?"

Diane Carter

Digital Director
Paradise Publishers

ANNA LYNN HURD

April 30, 1996 - February 23, 2013



*“What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.”*

– Helen Keller

ANNA'S JOURNEY

PART 1



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Violet	12
Joy-Ride	15
The Guilt Trip	20
Her or Me	23
Boy's Toys	28
Triggered	31
Warm Snow	39

VIOLET

It was Monday morning and the garbage trucks had already made their way up and down the narrow streets and avenues of St. Paul, Minnesota. I ran my fingers through the now bristly hair of a vintage style, “My Little Pony.” My mom had told me that no matter how far away she was, I’d always be her little girl. She would remind me of the Christmas when she took an extra job so that she could afford the purple pony with the rainbow hair. She laughed at how insistent I was that she bring home the pony with stars emblazoned on its cheeks. I named the pony, “Violet” and convinced my mom that the stars gave her magical powers that could heal people. She called me her little dreamer with a heart of gold who would do anything to make anyone feel better.

I wondered if she still felt that way about me this morning. Touching and pulling at the corners of a blanket I had built my childhood on protecting. I wondered if my decision to stay in Minnesota with Dad was the right one. The pink polka-dot Minnie Mouse blanket that once protected me now barely covered Violet and brought back other memories I’d rather forget. Its worn-out legacy recalled a time when my parents, frustrated with my need to take the blanket everywhere with me, would yell, “Well, you can’t take it everywhere with you FOREVER Anna!”

In protest, I stubbornly tore off a little piece of the softest edge and tucked it into one of my pockets just in time to make it to the bus stop one morning before elementary school. Now, at sixteen-years-old, I knew I would have to leave my childhood behind at some point, but not all of it; not now. Nestled in the zippered pocket of my purse behind a tube of lip-gloss Ashley let me borrow the other day after gym class, I refused to let the remaining piece of my childhood go. I knew that no matter how difficult things were getting these days, I'd always have something to remind me of how much I was loved.

Lately though, it seemed I couldn't make anyone happy. Conversations that used to go so well with mom were now tense while she worried about things I couldn't make her feel better about. Mom and Dad were divorced; and with Mom now living in Texas, she felt even more out of the loop as she struggled to be the mom she used to be before she moved a million miles away. History had taught my mom that no one could be trusted. Having come from a child abuse story of which I knew only bits and pieces, her overprotective nature fueled arguments I could never hope of winning.

My parents' divorce made me feel like I had to make impossible decisions about which parent I wanted to live with. I was beginning to realize that it wasn't really a question of what I wanted anymore. "Want" was just a word adults used to make kids feel like one choice was better than the other when in reality both choices had their downfalls. For now though, I decided to look at the bright side. Maybe there was a way to make Mom and Dad both happy.

'All I can do is try!' I thought, as I pretended to give Violet a pinky promise. Unfortunately, all the pony had to offer was her hoof. 'Oh well!' I scrambled for my backpack and phone, in a hurry to make it to school early. My boyfriend, Mark, would be furious if I was late. He was sure that I had the hots for some other guy in my 4th period Science class. I never understood how he came up with this information but apparently he had his "sources."

Supposedly Brian, one of Mark's friends had seen this "other guy" walking to school with me one morning. It was really just a group of us from the same bus stop but it was enough to send Mark into a tirade I would never hear the end of. In order to make sure there was no chance of my talking to him, Mark insisted I meet him thirty minutes before school every morning.

While I missed seeing my friends in the mornings before school, they chalked my absence up to just another jealous boyfriend protecting his territory. Besides, I felt it was kind of a tribute to how much he loved me. As I rushed down the sidewalk toward my school, I started thinking that it would be easier to not have any other plans with anyone, ever. Mark seemed mixed up and confused and needed me more than ever. He told me things that he had never told anyone else and made me promise to keep his secrets. He thought it was cute when I lifted my pinky up to pinky swear, a swear he knew I would never go back on.

With my mom so far away, and my dad now spending so much time with a new girlfriend, it felt good to be needed. Making people feel better was a role everyone said I was good at. For a while, it felt like it was Mark and me against the world but lately, it seemed like he was always upset at me about something. No matter what I did these days, it was never enough to prove my loyalty.

He was in JROTC and loyalty was a big deal to him. Everything boiled down to whether people were respecting him. Mark would always have a way of testing people to make sure they weren't lying. He told and re-told stories of all the guys who were guilty of backstabbing him and how he'd never let THAT kind of thing happen to him again. I felt badly for him and did whatever I could to not be one of those people.

This morning, I would make it to school early with the hopes of beating Mark there. Skipping breakfast could be a bragging point. Not knowing exactly what would please him anymore, I thought, 'Perhaps if he sees me trying to get to school in time to greet him, maybe THEN he would know how much I really love him.'

Pumping up the volume on my iPod, I hummed along to my favorite song "If I Die Young" by The Band Perry, "And life ain't always what you think it ought to be, no," just in time to see Mark rounding the corner with a glare I was beginning to know all too well.

JOY-RIDE

One of the fastest growing high schools in Minnesota, North Saint Paul High School was one of those schools where it was hard to make a name for yourself. Mark was one of the taller guys though and at 5'11", with dark hair and deep-set pondering eyes, there was a seriousness about him that wasn't like other guys his age. Everyone told us what a cute couple we were and how glued to the hip we seemed to be. We were both tall and, at first, it seemed as though I was the answer to all of his questions. Or, perhaps he thought I HAD all the answers to his questions because he texted me whenever he would have even the smallest problem.

At first it was funny to get a text from Mark about how long it should take him to cook a Hot Pocket, or how to program his DVR for this week's episode of "Vampire Diaries." It wasn't at all strange to get a text from Mark at 1am on a school night asking me if I knew where some random part to his JROTC uniform was.

I started wondering if he really needed to know these things, or if that was just his way of checking up on me. In the beginning, his constant questions were innocent enough as long as I knew the answers or pretended to care. And I felt badly that I didn't always care. I had other things to care about like calls from my mom or my dad that if left unanswered, would get me into more serious trouble. It wasn't easy to ignore the emotional tug of war that was becoming my life. People, not just Mark, were counting on me to make them happy and while I did my best, that wasn't always possible. Much like this morning.

I pulled my fluorescent pink and green ear-buds out of my ears because I knew that leaving them in would infuriate him even more. Mark hated it when I wasn't paying complete attention to him, especially when he was angry. The oversized trucker-hat that I once thought was edgy and mysterious, now barely hid his clenching jaw as Mark made his way past our classmates. Not completely understanding why he would be mad at me this time, I braced myself for whatever accusation he might have in mind. Apparently, this morning, he was angry at me for being early.

“So, wassup?” Mark managed to keep his composure long enough to continue, “Wanna tell me why you're here early? Whatcha tryin' to hide from me Annabana?”

He always tried to decorate his intentions with stolen pet-names that now sounded like fingernails down a chalkboard. Annabana was a nickname that was coined by my family. Mark had just happened to hear my sister call me the name over the phone a few times and thought it was okay to manipulate me with it during times like this. He was insistent on listening in on all of my phone calls because he claimed it would help him get to know me better. Not having the heart to tell Mark how weird it felt for him to call me Annabana, I didn't dare say anything, especially now in the heat of the moment as he reached for my phone before I had a chance to bury it in my backpack.

“I thought I'd surprise you!” I responded in the most cheerful voice I could muster.

“Really?” Mark asked, in a half-believing but hopeful way that sounded almost sad. I thought that somewhere deep down inside, he wanted to believe me, but too much had happened for him to believe the truth. He simply couldn't believe that he alone, my BOYFRIEND, was worthy of my early arrival. While the hopeful sound of his “really” tempted me into thinking this could be reconciled, his palpable anger proved what his words couldn't. No matter how hopeful he sounded, Mark frustratingly scrolled down the list of text messages on my phone, frantically searching for the name of that “other guy” from my Science class.

“What's his name again Annabana?”

“Uhhh, who?” I answered. I was confused because I couldn’t keep up with who Mark was worried about from minute to minute.

“Homeboy, the one who likes to carry your nonexistent books cause’ they’re SO HEAVY!” Mark laughed snidely, convinced that this “other guy” was the REAL reason I was early that morning.

“Um, I don’t even remember his name and I don’t even have his number!” I tried uselessly to explain the unexplainable but the more I tried, the more suspicious Mark became. If I knew the guy’s name, I’d be in even worse trouble for knowing it, so I waited for the next question I would fail at answering for him.

“You must have deleted him. Oh, well, now we’ll never really know, will we?”

The expression on my face must have said it all as Mark did what he always did when he knew I’d reached my limit because he added, “Aw! C’mon Annabana, you know I’m kiddin’”

My now hi-jacked phone started vibrating in his hand, distracting him from what could have been a real moment of empathy. Mark was tortured and there wasn’t a damn thing I could do about it. He was just looking for the next thing to obsess about while my girlfriend Veronica delivered what would be one of a series of invitations I couldn’t turn down.

These new escapades promised to provide some real fun for a change but in Mark’s hands, plans would be held hostage to all sorts of excuses as to why he needed me that afternoon or the afternoon after that, or the one after that.

Luckily, the first bell of the morning allowed me to quickly grab my phone out of his hands. Pecking him on the cheek, I reassured him that I’d be there waiting for him after school in the parking lot.

Embarrassed by the scene in front of my school, I tried to ignore the worried glances from some of my classmates and made a mental note not to be that early again for school. Mark would probably forget about all of this by the time they would get home later, so I tried to push the incident to the back of

my mind, but, for the smallest moment, I couldn't help wonder what things would be like in a new school where I could start all over again. My mom had been begging me to move to Texas for a new start. I wondered what it would feel like without all the drama that seemed to be happening everywhere I turned these days.

Making my way down the crowded hallway of my high school, I was relieved that Mark wasn't able to see the content of the text message that awaited me. During my first break without him, I opened the message from Veronica that read, "You, me, & Blood on the Dance Floor behind the gym after school today. No quitters."

While not my first choice in music, I had barely even heard of the band that Veronica had been trying to get me to listen to for weeks. Veronica, and in fact all of my friends, made Mark nervous so it was getting harder and harder to see any of them without conflict. More than irritated by the show earlier that morning, my mind soared at what would happen if I broke free, just this once.

I considered all of the emergencies and excuses I could make for not meeting Mark that afternoon and decided to play it safe by sending him a text during lunch. Maybe I could tell him that I had the stomach flu or something. It seemed easy enough to avoid him in the hallway for my remaining classes and escape to Veronica's car just before the final bell.

"Finally, I can breathe! I can breathe, I can BREATHE!" I chanted to myself mindlessly for the next few hours as I promised I would make it up to Mark later. He had become so suffocating lately. All I needed was a few hours with friends who weren't so obsessed with interrogating me all the time or making me feel like I had done something wrong. Waiting in the back of the school for Veronica, I gathered maple keys from alongside the professionally manicured parking lot. The maintenance crew must have forgotten the few I was able to it in my hand. In so many ways, I felt just as lost as they did.

My mind wandered to a place where everything seemed so simple. I didn't have to worry about where I was going or why I started out the way I did. The maple keys in my hand that afternoon had no idea which tree they came from. They were my little messengers just waiting to deliver a new adventure. 'Who

knows where I'll wind up?' I thought. Veronica's electric blue hair seemed to match my mood that day as she finally arrived to take me on what would be my very first joyride. Joy wasn't a word I was too familiar with these days but I felt I had served my time with Mark over the last several weeks and maybe deserved a little joy all my own.

Hopping into the passenger seat, I rolled the window down, knowing exactly what I would do when we hit the highway. As the defiant sounds of Veronica's favorite band erupted through the speakers, I shoved my hand out the window and let go. Just like when I was a kid, the tiny little messengers took a wild ride of their own that day. I let myself get lost in moments of my own. I closed my eyes and remembered every second of every sound while allowing myself to forget angry text messages from a boy who didn't seem to know how to be by himself.

Struggling with my guilty conscience would be something I could deal with later. For the next several hours, I could be myself without fear of the consequences and without the burden of making someone feel better. Veronica did her best to distract me from a worried boyfriend who was sure I was cheating on him. Instead, we listened to songs I had never heard before and talked about hopes and dreams that had nothing to do with guys.

Upon returning home from my afternoon of self-discovery, fifty hate filled texts reminded me that it wasn't okay to just be "me" anymore.

THE GUILT TRIP

Not bothering to open any of Mark's fifty texts that awaited me when I got home from my joyride with Veronica, I got busy deleting the messages that held bad energy and threatened to ruin my entire afternoon. It was bad enough to return home with worries of how my dad was doing. My dad had been sick on and off for months. His illness was one of the only reasons I picked living in Minnesota over living with my mom in Texas. I thought that being closer to him would make him feel better. At least that is what he promised me after countless battles with Mom about the choice that would wind up changing my life forever.

At first, things seemed to be going okay. I liked taking care of my dad when I could. Picking up extra chores and responsibilities didn't seem so bad because I knew they weren't something he could handle due to his condition.

Nowadays though, it felt like he was sleeping in more often, irritable more often, suspicious too often of me, of the world, of Mark. He hated Mark. Most dads hated their daughter's boyfriends so I chalked some of his mood up to dads just doing what dads do.

He meant well though, but I had a hard time convincing the world of that sometimes. There were things I wasn't allowed to know about my dad. There were things I found out other ways but, no matter what I discovered, I believe everyone deserves a chance to get it right, as long as their heart's in the right place.

This drove my mom and all of my friends nuts. Not just because I gave my dad a lot of chances, but also because, in their opinion, I gave all the wrong people a lot of chances. Rapidly erasing texts that read, “so who ya’ with?” and “up to no good” and “liar, I know what you’re up to,” I started confusing those texts sent from Mark and messages I was starting to get regularly from my dad these days. Every one of the texts that met their demise that day was confrontational, accusatory, and mean. The only messages that contained any hope were from well-meaning friends who didn’t need to control me or make me feel guilty about something I had no idea I was supposed to do in the first place.

It seemed some people were capable of using my good intentions against me and, stupidly, I’d let them. I just didn’t want to argue anymore. I wanted some peace and would follow the rules but the rules seemed to always be changing. The rules changed with my dad, with Mark, with girls at school who baited me into reactions in order to make me the enemy over and over again. Clearly, pinky promises weren’t working anymore. Clearly, people couldn’t be taken for their word anymore either because they forgot what they said, or because someone had broken a promise to them once. Either way, life was getting confusing as I frantically removed all the doubt-filled attacks to my character and moved on to searching for a two day old piece of pizza.

I was surprised to see the frigid slice waiting for me, in the same spot I had left it over the weekend. My dad would forget to go grocery shopping, so it was up to me to get creative with my own hiding places for leftover food. This lucky slice had remained between an empty jar of pickles and a now 2-pack of Michelob Ultra. Fishing it out with one hand and pressing delete on my phone with the other, I managed to delete the last two texts and with a huge sigh of relief and collapsed into a chair at the kitchen table. I forced myself to eat despite my nerves. The clock was counting down to the moment when I’d be busted by either Mark or my dad for being late, or being absent, or being whatever else I was guilty of being that afternoon.

I was starting to smarten up by assigning ringtones to my friends, so I knew which calls to ignore. Finishing up the last slice of pepperoni pizza from the recycled Ziploc bag, a song from “Asking Alexandria” started chiming loudly on my phone. Wondering why Veronica would be calling and not texting, I answered, hoping it was to plan another escape.

“Um, did you hear about what happened to Mark? Haven’t you checked your phone yet?” she rushed through the sentences and, not waiting for me to completely answer them blurted, “Um, Anna never mind the messages. Listen to me! He got hit by a car in the school parking lot!”

“What?!” I scrambled to make sense of what I had just heard while Veronica explained that while waiting for me in the school parking lot, Mark had been struck by a student driver. Because I had deleted all of the messages, nothing made sense because Mark’s urgency was always the same. One urgent text seemed no different than the next. Before I could even finish a thought, the next of Mark’s texts came through. “Maybe if you came to pick me up like you said you were, maybe this wouldn’t have happened to me. Hope you’re feeling better.”

The truth of what happened that day in the parking lot is what teenage rumor mills are made out of. Some would think Mark got hit on purpose, while some would question whether there was really an accident at all. No matter which way you cut it, Mark’s guilt-trip would trump any progress that could have been made on my joyride that afternoon.

He would tell me that he had needed me and that I wasn’t there. He would ask me if my stomach flu was worth it. His injuries would linger for as long as they worked their magic on me and for as long as I had a conscience.

... HER OR ME ...

In the weeks that followed Mark's "accident," I struggled with choices I had made at the hands of a boyfriend who needed more attention than I could give him. At a friend's house, Mark collapsed after horsing around. The broken ribs that were just beginning to heal were now re-injured as he lay on the floor gasping for breath. I got the call from our mutual friend with a plea to help take Mark to the emergency room, insisting, "He won't go without you Anna." What used to matter to me was now becoming impossible for me to handle. How in the world could I have a life outside of what I needed to do for Mark?

It seemed I had to be everywhere with him on the off chance something bad happened. That is why it was impossible to believe that there was ever a time that Mark could have been the one who strayed. But my mom always warned me that the ones who are the most suspicious of you are usually the ones with something to hide. I was beginning to regret not heeding her advice.

I wondered why I hadn't trusted my instincts enough months earlier, and why I would jeopardize any of my friendships for a boy, especially a boy who liked to toy with me; a boy who would never be satisfied with what I could give him no matter how hard I tried. The pressure to answer every call and to be available for him every second of every day did not prepare me for a truth he so willingly kept from me, a truth that nearly cost me one of my dearest friendships.

Ashley was one of those girls that everyone could be jealous of but was the last person to ever understand why. I liked how she would try just about anything and how fear was always the last thing on her mind. She was the

first person to really show me how to cook. Well, “cooking” isn’t really the right word for it. On Saturday afternoons, with all the time in the world, our version of trouble was finding ingredients that sounded like they went together. With Ashley, everything was an experiment or an adventure. Even when I bombed at making brownies or Jell-O, she had a way of making my mistakes alright.

Like Veronica, Ashley did her best to distract me from the heaviness of life. Her life was crazy too and similar enough to mine, that I was able to comfort her in ways that so many of her other friends could not. We bonded on the nights when she swore she couldn’t take it anymore.

When she was on the brink of giving up, she would tell me that I taught her what the word “courageous” really meant. Struggling to understand how I could have taught her that, I thought about my own life and how less-than-courageous I really felt. I told Ashley about the only thing I could ever rely on was the moon. Crying in the loneliness of my own struggles, I told her about how I convinced myself that everything would be okay if the moon was waiting for me after a long day, a long battle, fighting against people who only questioned my good intentions.

She told me that I was the first person to understand and accept the real her. Back in the days when pinky promises meant something, this was one pinky promise that haunted me as I reflected on Mark and his games. I wondered why I had chosen to not believe her. I wondered how many more times I was going to roll over for everyone while bulldozing my own life. The promise I made to Ashley was really a promise I made to myself. It was a promise to not abandon a friend in her hour of need. I made the promise to Mark too, but I failed to recognize that somebody’s “hour of need,” is entirely a matter of perspective.

On more than one occasion, I made the promise to not abandon a boy who had abandoned me too many times of his own. Threatening to commit suicide if I left him, I wondered if anyone cared about the promises they were making to me. It started dawning on me that I wasn’t the type to expect that kind of thing from anyone. I didn’t want people to feel like they owed me anything. It wasn’t anyone else’s job to take care of me.

Many months after my promise to Ashley, our escapades in the kitchen gave way to partying that sometimes got us both in trouble. What would have torn most friends a part only seemed to solidify our friendship. We didn't turn on each other like so many other friends that age would have. Neither of us was looking for someone to blame because both of us innately knew that blame would simply just separate the inseparable. Back then, it didn't seem as if anything could get in between us, as long as there wasn't anyone else calling me on my promises.

I met Mark in the midst of our teenage adventures. What started out as Ashley and me, became a close knit group of harmless teens who simply wanted a new way of passing the time together. I met Mark within the chaos that was our circle of friends that summer and he would wind up changing my mind about everything.

Everything I thought I knew about friendship, trust, and promises would change when I allowed myself to surrender to the title of his girlfriend.

“Girlfriend” came with all the bells and whistles in our social circle. Girlfriends trusted their boyfriends blindly but not vice-versa. Girlfriends stood by their men no matter what their girlfriends would tell them. Even, when “their men” were really just boys puffing out their chests and claiming their territory. Girlfriends gave boyfriends second, third, and fourth chances while their futures went up in smoke.

I didn't want to be a bad girlfriend when Ashley told me about how Mark took advantage of her at one of our parties. I would be faced with yet another IMPOSSIBLE decision. “Her....or me. Anna? Who ya gonna believe?” Mark challenged me. “Ya gonna trust your bro' now?”

He did what he always did at times like these. Stealing the pet nick-name Ashley and I had given to each other, Mark used “bro” as a weapon against the girl I once called my best friend. Mark always had a knack for saying what he knew would work.

Do I believe the girl who cried with me by the light of the moon? A girl who looked just like I did in my moment of need, when I offered her that promise? I didn't know about Mark's ways back then. As he stood glaring at me in the

front yard of a friend's house, I was embarrassed that either one of my friends would put me in this situation, especially friends who expected the world of me.

Things got crazy at some of these parties and more often than not, girls got the short end of the stick in the reputation department. Mark continued calling out the best friend who tried to warn me. "Why do you think Ashley made you make that promise to her? That chick has issues and she just made me one of them."

The scene Ashley laid out for me was not the same scene Mark described. Mark described a party that was out of control. He swore that no one really could remember anything that happened that night and that it was just like Ashley to blow things out of proportion. The world was spinning out of its orbit as my mind tried to imagine the moment as Ashley had described it, in disgusting detail.

On a couch in a crowded room sat Ashley, some guy, and Mark. Her version consisted of Mark seizing a moment of opportunity while Ashley was making out with someone else and not paying attention. Feeling Mark's hands up her skirt and in between her legs, she realized what was happening and stopped him. Horrified by what he had done, she tortured herself about whether she should tell me. Denying that he remembered anything about what had happened, at first she claimed that he changed his mind the next morning. Upon driving Ashley home, she claimed Mark confessed to her that he remembered everything.

"Everything" seemed to be a matter of perspective that afternoon. 'Everything except the cold,' I thought. I hated the cold even more because it seemed colder in the shadow of what just happened. I hated everything about this place. I hated everything that was supposed to be different, like my best friend who should have been my best friend forever. My boyfriend never should have put himself in a situation where I would have to wonder who was telling the truth. But, no one ever promised me life would be perfect.

All I could really depend on was the moon. For some reason though, on that afternoon, I hoped it wouldn't be waiting for me later. The things I had once comforted myself with as a child were quickly losing their luster. The moon

felt like a lie that day. It felt just like all the other lies I had bought into, things like friendships that were built on pinky promises or boyfriends who expected me to prove my loyalty, no matter what the price.

As Mark begged and pleaded with me to believe his version of the story, I knew I would have to give up on someone that day. Back then though, I wasn't aware of Mark's ways. I wasn't aware then of his pattern of guilt-tripping and manipulating me back into a relationship with him. He had never made me feel insecure before and in the frosty air of that awful afternoon, his clinginess felt more like a warm blanket. Similar to the blanket whose piece remained hidden in my purse, I couldn't face the reality of yet another lie. A long time ago, I ignored anything that didn't feel like my childhood and in so doing, turned my back on myself.

BOY'S TOYS

There wasn't much that could capture Mark's attention like I could, but in the weeks after the nightmare with Ashley, my new title of "girlfriend" introduced a another pressure point that Mark would cure with afternoon's dedicated to rounds of Black Ops and whatever other video game that could wet his appetite for death and destruction. It seemed all the guys had an appetite for any game that would require pinpoint accuracy and maximum suffering. JROTC could only quench part of what seemed like their natural zeal for hunting the bad guys and for protecting the ones they loved. Call of Duty would ill in the blanks on snowy afternoons when parents were at work and boys were looking to stay out of trouble.

Part of my new role of "girlfriend" would mean my attendance on more than some of these afternoons. The good girlfriends had an abundance of patience and a pack of Marlboros, Camel's if Chandra was going to be there. Chandra completed our innermost circle of friends. She and Mark and I always brought enough tobacco for each other just in case we didn't have a ride to the store. It was part of a pact we made that included an exit strategy. One day, we would all quit, when things got better for all of us. For now though, we'd be happy keeping each other warm and motivated for the hours ahead.

Bored to tears inside a cramped room full of boys, girlfriends weren't allowed to play and it was frowned on to watch or react to what unfolded during the game because "no dude needs that kind of pressure." Forced outside onto a tiny concrete porch, frigid afternoons could be tolerated with a cig and a few not-so-spontaneous conversations with other girlfriends. Fishing in my purse for the hourglass-shaped Ed Hardy lighter I picked up the other day during my joyride with Veronica, I remembered the thrill when I spotted the only

purple lighter hiding in a display at a gas station we had stopped at along the way. Inscribed with the familiar Ed Hardy line, “Love Kills,” I liked how the saying contrasted with its innocent lavender cover. It was the same lavender as “My Little Pony” Violet, who I imagined was waiting for me at home.

Finally locating the lighter behind the torn off scrap of blanket from eons ago, I glanced at the skull that seemed so tauntingly mischievous and wondered what the lighter might look like with Violet on the front instead. Getting lost in my own daydream, I envisioned Violet’s hoofs jumping out from clouds of diamonds. My lips were getting numb as I pulled the lighter closer and took my first drag of what was now a soggy cigarette. My purple hoody was barely doing the job today and I was thankful my mom couldn’t see how right she was.

Muffled shouting and groans from inside seemed to mimic my mood. I could vaguely make out what the guys were saying. “You know that’s what’s gonna happen the next time she doesn’t answer. I said, open up b*tch cause’ I’ve gotta little present for you!” More laughs followed what now sounded like explosions. Apparently, they didn’t want anyone in on their version of entertainment as someone increased the volume to new decibels of ridiculousness.

None of this was unusual banter among brothers who demanded loyalty out of every situation, even situations that were easily explainable. It was widely rumored that one of the girlfriends learned this lesson earlier that year when her phone died while shopping with her mom at Maplewood Mall. No one really talked about the details of what happened the afternoon she didn’t answer or return her boyfriend’s calls but suffice it to say, no one wanted to be that girl. “That girl” was now an outcast and the guys had done such a good job making her out to be a tramp, no one would even talk to her anymore. Anyone who kept in contact with “that girl,” would only suffer a similar fate.

I was considering a second cigarette when Mark’s friend Brian peeked out the front door and motioned for my purse. Lighter in hand and a spare cigarette in my hoodie pocket, I handed him my purse.

“Phone in it?” Brian mumbled, almost embarrassed to be asking the question.

“Um, yeah,” I sighed.

“Your man needs his chew, k?” And without waiting for my answer, Brian reached out and grabbed the purse with an obligatory, “Man, its cold out here you should come in and make us some drinks Bana.”

Taking Brian up on his suggestion for me to get to work making drinks for everyone, I made my way into the sweaty room and past Mark who was already busy scrolling through my texts. The chew he had wrangled out of my purse had already made it to his lower lip as he managed an approving smile. ‘Passed,’ I thought, happy I passed his first test of the day. Reaching out to lock pinkies with him, his hand was already occupied with the Tac Force Magnum knife that seemed to always take up residence there these days.

I knew not to mess with the knife he had been gloating over for weeks. Brian had lent him the very same knife months ago and now an identical red weapon with the fire fighter’s seal encrusted on the outside was his baby. No one would get in between Mark and the tool that defined him; no one, especially a “girlfriend” like me. While he had done an adequate job of convincing me that nothing had happened with Ashley, I still had not done an adequate job of convincing him that I was loyal. The joyride with Veronica the other day didn’t help my case.

Considering myself lucky to still be included in our circle of friends, I pushed my way to the kitchen where Chandra was huddled in the corner scribbling something down on a piece of paper with a burnt orange crayon. She was one of my closest forever friends. Chandra wasn’t sure enough about herself to ever be an Ashley, so I took solace in the fact that I’d never have to watch her with Mark. Chandra and Mark were like brother and sister.

I started pouring Southern Comfort into paper cups filled with lemonade but that was too sour for my taste. The guys liked it that way and so the girlfriends would always oblige. That was the easiest way to keep the peace, for the time being anyway.

TRIGGERED ...

My issues with loyalty would land me in hot water, time and time again. Flipping the “rescue” knife over and over in his oversized hands, I watched Mark run his thumb over its serrated edge, slowing down each time as if to tempt the pain it promised. The knife’s ire engine red cover that had once sported a rugged relief now was worn down to a nub. Too many people had witnessed the ritual that Mark took pride in. Friends were no longer alarmed by an insecure boy’s need to play with his toy, no matter how dangerous the weapon actually was. No different than “My Little Pony”, Violet or the scrap of blanket in my purse, Mark took comfort in testing the knife’s rough edges. Manipulating the tool that was guaranteed to kill, Mark had control he wouldn’t ordinarily have had back in our days of parties and courtship.

He would argue that the other guys were no different. “They just don’t know how to use it like I do Bana. Operating a weapon like this takes practice.” Mark reassured me that fidgeting with it for hours was necessary. In order to protect what he claimed was his territory, Mark would get lost in his fears. I couldn’t go anywhere, do anything, or see anyone, without him thinking I was cheating on him.

I was no one to talk, though. Everyone has a different way of dealing with loyalty. I suppose it is what brought Mark and me together in the first place. He had his group of friends, and I had mine. That’s the way everyone in high school seemed to operate. Stick up or get knocked down. Girlfriends were as brutal as guys were and I was just as guilty of getting caught up in the mix. It wasn’t abnormal to hear about fights between girls, even in class. No one was safe from what would quickly become hand-to-hand combat. Some of the battles would get caught on video and shared on YouTube for everybody’s

entertainment.

Bullying wasn't just a buzzword it was a way of life. With the rest of my world in chaos, I took solace in easily definable relationships. I picked girlfriends in cliques in order to lessen my risk of getting caught up in too many turf wars. No one wanted to become a Brittany. Regretting an incident that got me expelled last year, I remembered a girl who was picked on. I hated myself for joining in. My life had become a pressure cooker and with all eyes on me, I wondered if Brittany could ever forgive me.

Taking the bait during class one day, I would become the victim of what everyone expected of me. I was the girl with the messed up family who didn't know one thing about loyalty. My brothers and sisters blamed either my mom or my dad and rumors would swirl about my "questionable" upbringing. I was never allowed to just be ME. Friends would push me to join a side, or else.

It seemed everything was an "or else" proposition back then. 'It's that way even today,' I thought as I sat watching Mark spinning the blade by its tip. Wishing I could see now what I couldn't see then, I recalled the impossible situation at school with Brittany. She had made the mistake of going out with someone else's boyfriend and suffered the consequences. The marketing effort by a pack of caddy girls would eventually lead to her undoing, and mine. But I couldn't see it that way then. I was in a boiling pot of social pressure and family conflict that would put a fight with Jaws to shame.

Too often, my life felt like a UFC event with a dose of Dr. Phil for good measure. Everyone seemed to have a perspective about who I was and how I got that way. Feeling constantly judged and criticized, these caddy girls would be there as a shoulder as long as I was willing to be their lightning rod, their defender, their doormat. I would be whoever they needed me to be because that was easier than the alternative. And there seemed simply no way I would ever become their VICTIM.

Brittany had unwittingly played with ire that day. Someone with questionable intent threw a pencil. At least in my mind, I was certain of her reasons. Or was I? My clouded judgment took driver's seat to what seemed the more rational thing to do. Little did I know that the moment I snapped would be the

moment that would ultimately bring me to Mark.

The pencil might as well have been a pipe bomb. While only as light as a feather, the pencil carried the additional weight of public humiliation.

“Who threw that at me?” My voice came out louder than I had intended as the entire room shifted their focus to me.

“I didn’t THROW it at you,” chimed in Brittany.

The branding of Brittany seemed to be working because the sarcastic tone in her voice felt oppressively loud. Her subtext seemed to be shouting, “NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?” or, maybe, that subtext belonged to my friends.

Either way, I took the bait that was so eagerly crammed down my throat by a culture of ego-driven teens on a rampage. I joined in for self-preservation. Had I not attacked Brittany that day during class, I most assuredly would have been labeled a traitor. ‘A traitor of what?’ I pondered the notion that maybe “traitor” was a matter of perspective. I didn’t really know Brittany well enough to be considered her traitor nor did I REALLY know those other girls in class. That only left one other person.

Even in this deep state of reflection, I still didn’t fully grasp the gravity of what I did that day in class. It was almost like someone else had inhabited a ME that was desperate to defend myself amidst a coliseum full of cheering spectators. I was a caged animal doing what they do best, fight.

If I was expecting someone to stick up for me, I was sorely disappointed. Instead, the chorus of, “You’re doing this to yourself, Anna,” played louder than any guilt trip Mark could ever lay on me. I couldn’t hide from anyone once I was expelled from school. Stories about how I punched a teacher in the face would follow me in hallways and at parties. At midnight when the rest of the world was asleep, I would be wide-awake, haunting myself with what could have been.

To this very day, I wonder what I could have done differently. In the face of an impossible situation, I’d be judged time and time again. No one bothered to

give me the benefit of the doubt, that perhaps, maybe, just maybe, I punched the teacher by accident. Getting caught in the moment, I punched and clawed my way to the principal's office where "troubled" and "at-risk" kids go when they're backed into a corner.

Transferring schools would introduce me to Mark, the boyfriend who promised to protect me no matter what. The guy with a knife and his own things to prove would make a logical partner. At first, I liked that Mark wouldn't just leave at the first sign of trouble. I felt I owed him the same in return.

Ignoring the intentional marks he was inflicting on the kitchen table, I was beginning to learn how to pick my battles. Besides, I was grateful at times for the guy who wouldn't abandon me, especially considering my history. While Mark was clingy and impossible more often than not, I had to consider what he signed up for with me. When well-meaning friends suggested I leave him, I remembered my own trigger-happy days. Maybe we are all degrees of the same dysfunction, whether we like it, or not.

Not having a lot of time to waste, I put my thoughts about loyalty aside and attended to the issue at hand. Tomorrow was the big day, the day I had agreed to go back to Texas to live with my mom. My dad was furious about my choice to abandon him. Mark sitting there in "his" kitchen at "his" kitchen table would surely cause a nuclear explosion. Not to mention the new carvings Mark was "innocently" leaving on its surface.

Whenever there was something going on with my mom, no matter what it was, my dad would turn things like houses and tables and rooms and couches from "ours" to "his." "Turning on him like everyone else has" was the way he would characterize my latest blunder. I was a traitor who had no place in HIS house.

The only reason Mark was there that morning was to help me pick up my stuff. We would have to hurry as my dad seemed to have a sixth sense for when things were going on at "his" house. Behr, my kitten, was frantically squirming under my arm, as if to get away and that annoyed me. I was getting tired of all of these consequences. "Why can't life be easier for a change?" I muttered, reminding Mark to push his chair in.

“I don’t want him to know you were here” I whispered. “Why are you whispering Anna? It’s not like your dad’s here!” Mark whispered back mockingly. Mark never knew how to take a situation seriously. Always testing the boundaries of everyone else’s patience, Mark seemed oblivious to what could happen.

“Lighten up Anna. We’re outta here anyway, right? WE... right?”

Handing Behr to Mark so that I could lift the rest of my bags, I avoided his question by grunting my way to the front door. “Hurry! We don’t want him to come home!”

My mind raced at the scene that would play out should my Dad discover me, my bags, and Mark making an escape. It was funny in that moment how I could feel like I was escaping when it was my dad who ordered me out in the first place.

Words like ‘escape’ and ‘freedom’ were now hugely relative as consequences started dictating my life. The consequences that resulted from these impossible decisions all had their downsides. Instead of freedom, I would simply be exchanging one prison for another.

“Ooohhh!!! I’m so afraid of YOUR dad!” Mark sputtered and staggered pretending like he was a drunken bum on the street. “My poooor Anna is leaving me! What am I gonna dooooo?!” Behr was counting his nine lives as Mark threatened to drop him, the poor kitten clinging on for dear life. I could see my girlfriend Lisa in the back seat of Mark’s car and hollered at her to grab Behr before it was too late.

“No way! Bana! Behr is MY kitty now!” Mark brought Behr up to his swollen lower lip full of chew. “We’re a nice happy f-a-m-i-l-y” he went on as Lisa looked at him disgusted. Having placed my bags in the car, Mark took Behr hostage while he angrily stepped on the gas in reverse. “And as long as you do what you say you’re gonna do, our f-a-m-i-l-y will STAY that WAY.” Mark purposefully jerked the car when changing the gear to drive, sending everything including my bags into the front seat.

“WTF MARK!” Lisa screamed. The cellphone she had been texting on only

moments earlier, was now nowhere to be found.

“Slow down! I don’t need any more drama!” I begged.

My begging seemed to excite him. “Oooh is Anna afraid she’s gonna get caught!” he chided me with his gooiest version of my Texas accent.

“Yeah she is!” Lisa attempted to defend my concern to no avail. “Why are you trying to mess it up for her!” she went on.

Slamming on the breaks, Mark swerved to the side of the road to an abrupt stop. “LISTEN!” he shouted. “I am the one in control here. I’m the one who’s saving Anna’s ass. SOMEONE should show me a little bit of respect!”

Clawing at the steering wheel, Behr tried desperately to escape Mark’s clenches, by accident clawing the skin between his thumb and forefinger.

“OW! F*ck’n J*sus Chr*st!” Grabbing Behr by the neck, he slammed the kittens head into the steering wheel, “Yeah, that means you too!!!” he barked.

Lisa yelped an “OMG” while I rescued the dazed and confused Behr from the monster who was so insistent on ruining EVERYTHING for me.

“Get me out of this car, or I’m calling the police!” Lisa demanded. Opening the door she made it to mine and pulled it open. “Get out Anna!” to which I obliged with Behr in tow.

Walking nearly a mile to Lisa’s house, we were both horrified to see Mark waiting for us in the driveway.

“It’s okay” Lisa assured me. “My mom’s home and she’ll talk some sense into him.”

Needing my bags for the long bus trip to Texas, I hated having to play nice in order to get my bags back.

“Well look what the kitten dragged in!” grabbing his stomach and belching with laughter, Mark felt he had more than earned this moment of torture. In

his mind, I am the one who had been torturing him for months by not being able to make up my mind about Texas. Couple that with a rumor that I had cheated on him and Mark's scene on Lisa's driveway made some twisted sense.

While Mark may have had his reasons that morning, Lisa and her mom would be able to read between the lines. On the outside, they witnessed an insecure boyfriend who used my family drama to suit his own desperate need to control me at all costs.

"Give me my phone Mark!" Lisa ordered heish it out of the car. And while he was trying to find it, we scrambled into her house where her mother stood powerlessly at the window watching the drama unfold on her driveway. She had seen this kind of thing before with Mark. Both she and her daughter had known him for longer than I did. The writing had been on the wall and it was only a matter of time before Mark would inflict damage he couldn't walk away from. At least that is what her mom told me while nervously waiting for Mark to get back inside with Lisa's phone.

"I know life has gotten complicated for you Anna." Lisa's mom implored me to put my loyalties aside for a moment to consider MY life for a change. "He isn't right Anna. You know this and you know that you can't make HIM right." Lisa's mom seemed particularly agitated and dismayed as she kept glancing out the window.

"Tell her what he did to Behr" Lisa stammered. "Tell her!"

I knew that telling Lisa's mom about what Mark did to the cat would put her over the edge. "That was by accident Lisa. You know he didn't mean to!" I cried. I knew in my heart that he did though. The rumbling in my stomach told me that despite of my genuine desire to just leave Mark and all of this behind me, there would be no way of doing so peaceably.

"I am so sorry I got you involved in all of this" I grabbed Lisa's mom's hand as if to translate a gratitude to the woman who was trying to stand up for me. Sensing my very real fear, Lisa's mom jolted from the couch in time to fasten a chair under the door to the living room. "Sit!" she motioned Lisa to the chair so that Mark couldn't make his way inside.

“This is YOUR life Anna. You don’t have to take THIS with you.” Lisa’s mom seemed to know what she was talking about as she pointed to Mark making his way up to the front door. “I have tried to reason with him for months and NOTHING will get through to him.” she went on, hoping to reach a very scared and timid me. “Now, what did he do to Behr and tell me the TRUTH.”

By this time, Mark was pounding on the living room door. Not wanting things to go from bad to worse, Lisa’s mom knelt down at my knees and whispered, “He’s going to kill you Anna. You have to put a stop to this before he kills you.” Getting back to her feet, she brushed the front of her trousers off as if they were dirty. “Be DONE with this because I am” She said, marching to the door and removing the chair.

Mark rushed in with an impish grin. “Hey Lisa’s Mom, how ya’ doin’?”

Mark delivered Lisa’s phone and glided across the room to my side. “I’m sorry Bana’... I’m just stressed you might leave without me. You know that would kill me, right?” His eyes were moist as Mark squeezed what he could out of the long lashes I had once idolized him for.

Behr seemed alright and with only one more night to go, I wondered if I could leave without a wake.

WARM SNOW

My window of opportunity was closing as I frantically fumbled with broken pieces of snowflakes in an attempt to decipher the undecipherable. Even the snow seemed tired tonight as it slipped heavily off worn out branches into what now looked like a mixture of muddy leaves and ice particles in my hand. No matter how hard I tried, I wouldn't be able to make these snowflakes beautiful again. The damage was done. I used to think anything was possible and that anything could be made whole again, but in the bright wide eye of the moon on this night, anything I did seemed to make things more complicated.

Searching for clarity, I turned to the moon for some comfort. It was bigger and clearer than I had ever remembered it. Almost like an exit sign, the moon seemed to approve of my decision to move back to Texas.

Looking at the pile of wreckage in my hand, it was also painfully clear that I'd have to move back to Texas without Mark, if I had any hope of recapturing my future. I struggled to match the mood of the party going on inside but failed miserably. Tonight was the last night I would have to make it right. "Was RIGHT even possible?" I thought. "Impossible" seemed to be the answer more often than not these days.

There were mumblings among Mark and his friends that I was as flakey as the broken snowflakes in my cupped hands that night. They called me flakey because I couldn't make up my mind about whether I wanted to stay or if I wanted to go and if I was going to go, if I would be taking Mark, or not.

With only a few more hours to go, any amount of faking my intent to let him come with me, would be well worth the price. However, my attempts at

convincing myself were futile against the beckoning moon. The freedom that would await me outside of Mark's suffocating grasp was a yearning I had let come to full boil. "Maybe I didn't need to fake it anymore," I thought. "Maybe Mark needs to hear the truth for a change."

Too often I would find myself squelching my true feelings out of fear for what Mark might do. What used to be childish temper tantrums were now spiraling out of control as Mark would suggest that even a sneeze in his direction meant I loved him and if I sneezed in the other direction, it meant I'd wind up leaving him, just like all the rest. Tonight all signs indicated I would be leaving him and he knew it.

While I hated myself for faking it, I knew in my heart that I had given Mark every chance in the book to get it right with me. In the face of these chances, he would blow what could have been so great between him and me. "He's the one who was faking it with me." I credited the moon that night for telling me what I couldn't accept myself. I forced myself to accept the moon's advice. She had never let me down before.

My fingertips were becoming numb to the now frigid mess playing out in my hands. Attempting to clean it off, I made a new mess on my favorite lavender hoodie, the hoodie I had worn intentionally for my final trip home. Trying to figure everything out, I kept making more of a mess. Frustrated, I removed the hoodie and made my way inside to the kitchen sink with the hope that I might be able to save it.

"BANA!" the sharp sound of my very own name stopped me in my tracks midway through the living room. Mark laughed at how I jolted to attention. "That's what I'm talkin' about." he laughed, hoping to gain the approval of his friends.

This time though, Mark's friend Brian shook his head in disapproval, "Nah, man, not tonight. She's leavin' dude. She's not yours anymore." My heart sunk because I knew all eyes were on me.

"Whatever," I mumbled and tried to become as invisible as possible. "C'mon Bana, you know you're leaving without him, don't you? We all know what's really going on." Brian kept attempting to force my hand on behalf of his best

friend for life.

“C’mon Bana, tell everyone what they wanna hear.” Mark wasn’t a good liar and couldn’t hide the fear that lived behind this simple command. He knew what the answer was and knew that I would lie just to prevent another scene.

“It depends on if he can get on the bus with me.”

“For real, like you can’t take that kinda thing back now Anna.” I felt like the stain on my hoodie was settling into the purple fibers and ruining it forever.

“How can I control whether you get on that bus or not?” I managed to shuffle some of my guilty conscience onto the last minute logistical nightmare that would occur should he not be able to get a ticket. “How could that possibly be MY fault?” I asked.

Not waiting for either one of them to make a feeble response, I hurried into the kitchen to see how bad the stain was. As I was running the fabric under the warm water from the faucet, Mark abandoned his friend and saddled up behind me in an attempt to give me a bear hug. Tonight, it felt more like a noose.

“Hurry up, let’s see if we can get that ticket...k?” Mark’s words sounded unusually sweet. Kissing the back of my neck and along the ridge of my shoulders, he pecked away and with each peck, the pressure of his expectations burned into my flesh as if to say, “There’s no backing out now Anna.”

Squirming away from his impossibly long grasp, I felt he couldn’t help but sense my resistance. Pulling me closer, he caused me to drop the entire hoodie into the sink.

‘There’s no way it’s going to dry in time to take it with me.’ I thought. Disgusted that I had let him ruin yet another thing that meant the world to me, I considered this latest offense as yet another sign to leave Mark behind for good. I couldn’t tell him this, though; my escape depended on it.

“If you mean it, we should go,” he chided. “Like now!” he desperately held onto my belt loop, pulling me in his direction. “NOW, or I might not get a seat!”

Leaving the hoodie in the sink, I grabbed my duffle bag from its place by the front door and followed Mark outside into the front yard. “Impossible,” I kept thinking, remembering the same scene that played out months ago when Mark thought he’d lose me because of Ashley.

“I lost my best friend because of him. I lost my ability to find myself because of him. I don’t even know myself anymore because of him.” Thoughts kept rushing through my head as I frantically tried to find new ways of delaying the inevitable.

The moon was where I had left her only moments ago. She had told me the things I needed to know so that I would be prepared for the consequences. ANYTHING would be better than this gamesmanship. Life had to be more than acquiescing to HIS needs ALL THE TIME when I knew bloody well that there was NOTHING I COULD DO TO PLEASE HIM. I couldn’t even put his mind at ease anymore. Mark’s friends would only pile on, making me into a tramp no matter what I did.

“I’m so done with this place,” I told the moon in surrender.

Without my hoodie, I was cold and more than irritated. Instead of following behind Mark, like I usually would have, I marched out front in defiance. NO ONE was going to control what I wanted to do, who I wanted to be, where I was headed and who with... Mark felt small in my wake. I imagined his friends watching from the window as a “girlfriend” took charge of what he couldn’t. Embarrassed, he raced after me in the bitter stillness of that February night with his loyal friend in tow. The toy he would ritualize, manipulate, fondle would be his only friend on a night when things got too complicated.

He didn’t like how I wouldn’t respond to him. He didn’t like how I walked ahead and with my back turned against him. Displaying the ultimate sign of disrespect, Mark pressed me for answers he didn’t want the truth about. My only choice in those moments was to make it easy on him. I thought that the only way to make him believe that this was REALLY OVER was to become the tramp all of his friends would make me out to be. Mark could get over the thought of losing just another tramp, more than he could ever get over the thought of losing me.

Reconciling all of this in the presence of the moon, I made the biggest mistake of my life that night. I would make this “mistake” in the name of anyone trying to get out of a relationship like the one I had with Mark. Everyone would chalk this “mishap”, this “CRIME OF PASSION”, to two young kids who had nothing going for them. That is the true tragedy in this story.

Not surprisingly, Mark turned to the now sharpened serrated edges of the knife he nervously played with in his pocket. Afraid that nothing would stop me from leaving, he turned on the tears that had worked so well before and knelt in the dirty snow. “What if I ask you to marry me Anna?” he begged, knowing he had nothing to show for his true intentions.

Police reports would indicate an intention to marry me that was never ACTUALLY proven. Mark’s “BEST” friends would report that he had purchased an engagement ring but police were unable to verify that any purchase had ever happened. It became a talking point to conjure empathy for my boyfriend, the best friend, a guy EVERYBODY TRUSTED.

Instead, receipts and eye-witness accounts of the knife he used to stab me in the back would abound while he raced after me screaming, “DON’T WALK AWAY FROM ME!”

My mind’s eye was in overdrive as I thought...

-- I want him to go away --

-- What can I do to make him go away? --

“WHAT KINDA GIRLFRIEND ARE YOU ANYWAY? PLEASE ANNA, YOU DON’T WANT TO DO THIS!” he kept yelling while I kept thinking...

-- I don’t want to do this anymore --

-- What can I do to make US not do this anymore? --

-- Who can I be so that you won’t want me anymore? --

I grabbed my cellphone and in ultimate desperation, made the phone call that would wind up costing me my life.

I didn't know what Mark was really capable of that night. I thought he would just disappear and run off in the night. I thought I would just get back on that bus like nothing had ever happened. I thought being called a tramp or a troublemaker would be the worst of what could happen to me. That was a price I was willing to gladly pay in exchange for my freedom.

"Fine, you wanna know the TRUTH!" I turned to him for a moment, the last moment I would ever remember seeing his face. "I'm getting back together with T.J." I shouted. Knowing full well that I had not spoken to my ex in months, I dialed his number and spun around to continue walking.

I said the things I needed to say to convince Mark of my intentions. This was over, REALLY over and there was nothing Mark would EVER be able to do about it.

The moon was merciless as Mark ripped through my back and into my chest with what so many in his circle considered a toy. Not seeing it coming, I let go of a bag that held what was left of my childhood. Unable to escape his reach and his weapon, I surrendered to the moon and to a boy that night, a night that should have been far more forgiving. Life had never rolled that way for me before and in the brutality of those moments I sunk down into the snow and into the only truth that was left for me.

There would be no way out, no true understanding. I'd just be the nicest girl from a rotten past who was only trying to make the most of things. He would be a boy who needed everything of me, while expecting so little of himself.

"I'm sorry! Oh God, Bana, I'm so sorry...!" He sunk the serrated edge that he had spent his whole life sharpening into what was now left of my heart. "I didn't mean to! Oh God, I'm sorry! Tell me you didn't mean it!" Unable to hear my answer, he would stab me multiple times, sinking the blade deeper into my chest. I couldn't tell him what I had wanted to tell him all along.

The warm blood coursing out of my wounds made it impossible to speak my intention as I lay in what was now warm snow. Too shocked to feel any pain, I suddenly felt oddly relieved. Mark had permanently made my decision to

leave for me. I wouldn't have to let anyone down now. He would do that for me.

Mark would never know that I wasn't really getting back together with my ex. He would never know that all I really needed was some space from him. He would never know that he ended my life because he didn't believe in himself. Mark would never know that my life was just as valuable as his was because everyone wanted to re-victimize the victim. I would make an easy target.

There would be no winning for anyone in this equation. My dad would be blamed for kicking me out, leaving me with nowhere to go on this fateful night. My mom would be blamed for doing what most moms do, defending her daughter's honor and being viciously angry at her killer and his enablers. I would be blamed for not handling a rotten childhood well and for being blindly loyal and outrageously defensive. Mark's friends would be blamed for not stopping a best friend when he started showing obvious signs of losing control too often. My girlfriends would be blamed for not doing a better job of warning me. I would be blamed for leading Mark on in the wee hours of a February night after months of his psychological manipulation and brainwashing.

In the warm snow that greeted my surrender, I closed my eyes to a forgiving moon that would promise greater awareness. We are all to blame for life's consequences. The only thing we can ever really count on is that our percentage of responsibility will be doled out later.

Here's to the journey ...



WHO'S

AT RISK

PART 2



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Disbelief, Denial, & The Facts	50
Fact Or Myth?	52
Even With The Facts	55
Who Is At Risk?	59
The Mental Health Stigma	66
The Character Issue	70
Teen Dating Violence Is Not A Crime Of Passion	73
Abuser Tricks	75
Enabling Troubled Teens	80
Digital Harassment	81
Social Media & Teen Dating Violence	86
Conflict Resolution	90
When Love Turns To Violence	94
Dangerous Weapons	95
Animal Cruelty	97
Animal Cruelty: Are The Types Of Abusers	98
Why Do People Stay In Abusive Relationships?	101
Do You Know Someone Who Fits This Description?	104
Are You Abusive?	106
For Educators	107
For Healthcare Professionals	111
For Parents	113
Breaking Up With An Abusive Partner	126
Can Bystanders Really Make A Difference?	129
Quiz - Do Abusers Change?	131
Quiz - Am I A Good Boyfriend/Girlfriend?	133
Quiz – Healthy Relationship?	136
Quiz - How Would You Help?	139
Stop Abuse For Every Teen (Safe) Act	142
Help!	145
Love Is Respect.Org	147
About Our National Youth Advisory Board	148
Teen Dating Bill Of Rights And Pledge	149
The Dwelling Place	151
References	153
Other	155

DISBELIEF, DENIAL, & THE FACTS

In the days and weeks following the death of Anna Lynn Hurd, speculation as to who murdered her and why ran rampant in the small town of Northern St. Paul, Minnesota. Few wanted to accept the notion that anyone in their small circle of friends could have stabbed Anna to death but as the pieces of the puzzle started coming together, it became more and more clear that yes, indeed, one of their own was responsible for taking the life of a teenage girl that many regarded as being one of the kindest people they had ever met.

Even the self-confessed murderer had a hard time coping with the truth. Not being able to accept that he had murdered his own girlfriend, Mark would provide the authorities with a changing account of what had happened the night of her murder. His friends would attempt to come to his rescue as the rumor mill kicked into high gear and details started emerging about a troubled victim and her family.

In no time at all, the story of what happened to Anna Lynn Hurd became a story about how the victim was responsible for provoking her own death in the early morning hours of February 23, 2013.

A difficult pill to swallow, but a pill that this culture has become accustomed to swallowing, is the thought that the victim should shoulder the responsibility of the situation they have manufactured for themselves, even if that situation results in their demise. While conducting interviews with close friends and family, no one was REALLY willing to talk about the young man who took it upon himself to end the life of another human being. Did anybody see this coming?

“About 72% of 8th and 9th graders report dating; 1 in 4 adolescents report emotional, physical, or sexual violence each year; and 1 in 10 adolescents report being a victim of physical dating violence. Over 40% of young people who report they are victims of dating violence say that the incidents occurred in a school building or on school grounds.”

futures without violence .org ([click here](#) for more)

At the heart of this tragic story is a cautionary tale of egos that were left unchecked. These egos existed in every person who came in contact with both Anna and the boyfriend who took her life. It is human nature to want to protect our reputations, to protect our children, to protect the things that sustain our egos. It is not our goal to shame those of us who have egos but rather to awaken those of us who won't put our egos aside even for a second, to do the RIGHT thing on behalf of another human being.

“The NO MORE Study: Teens and Young Adults, conducted by GfK Public Affairs & Corporate Communications, and funded by the Avon Foundation for Women, uncovers the grim reality of dating violence and sexual assault among 15 - 22 year olds. The study reveals that many don't know about the warning signs and don't know what to do to stop violence and assault.

Included among the key findings of the NO MORE study:

- 51% of all 15-22-year-olds in the United States know a victim of dating violence or sexual assault.
- 53% say it would be hard for them to help a victim of dating violence or sexual assault.
- 40% say that they would not know what to do if they witnessed a sexual assault or dating violence.
- 1 in 3 young women and nearly 1 in 2 young men say they do not know the signs of sexual assault.
- 62% agree that talking about dating abuse and sexual assault would make it easier for them to step in and help someone.”

examiner.com ([click here](#) for the entire article)

The brutal stabbing death of Anna Lynn Hurd can happen to anyone. That is the scariest part of what every single study we have read and investigated tells us. The other scary fact is that one out of every three teens HAS EXPERIENCED rape, physical violence and/or stalking by a girlfriend or a boyfriend in their lifetime. What does this mean? Does this mean that we as a society are becoming more violent? Does this mean that we are more tolerant of inexcusable behavior? If these numbers are accurate, are we okay with this conclusion? And, most importantly, what does this mean for our children and for our children's children?

FACT OR MYTH?

from: [silent no more.org](http://silentnomore.org)

MYTH

Teen dating violence rarely happens.

FACT

Teen dating violence is as common as domestic violence in adult relationships. A 2001 study of high school students conducted by Harvard University found that one in five teenage girls had been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.

MYTH

Teen girls are as abusive as boys.

FACT

Research shows that teen girls are not as likely to be as abusive as teen boys. Teen boys are far more likely to initiate violence and teen girls are more likely to be violent in a case of self-defense.

MYTH

Some victims of teen dating violence or sexual assault provoke the violence committed by their dates by making them jealous, acting mean, or teasing them into thinking they want to have sex.

FACT

Dating violence is NEVER a victim's fault. There is no such thing as victim precipitated violence.

MYTH

Teen dating violence is just arguing. It's not dangerous like domestic violence in adult relationships.

FACT

Teen dating violence can be very dangerous – sometimes lethal. Results of teen dating violence and sexual assault include serious physical harm, emotional damage, sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancy, and death.

MYTH

Teen dating violence only occurs between boys and girls.

FACT

Teen dating violence and sexual assault is estimated to occur between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth at about the same rate as in straight teen relationships. (NCAVP, 2001; Dahir, 1999) However, LGBTQ youth are even less likely than heterosexual youth to tell anyone or seek help, and there are fewer resources for these teens.

MYTH

Teens experiencing dating violence usually tell a trusted adult.

FACT

Teens experiencing dating violence usually tell no one. When they do tell, they usually tell another teen. One study found that only 6% of girls and 11% of boys told anyone about the abuse that they experienced (O'Keefe and Treister, 1998).

MYTH

Alcohol and drugs can cause teen dating violence and sexual assault.

FACT

Alcohol and drugs can and do exacerbate violence, but they are NEVER the cause of violence (Bennett, 1997; Schechter and Ganley, 1995).

MYTH

Sexual assault rarely happens to teens, and when it does, it is perpetrated by a stranger.

FACT

Middle school, high school, and college age women experience a higher rate of rape than any other group. Rape is most likely to be perpetrated by someone the victim knows, such as a friend, an acquaintance, a date, a family member, or a partner (Silverman, Raj, Mucci, and Hathaway, 2001; Warshaw, 1988; Haplem, Oslak, Young, Martin, and Kupper, 2001).

MYTH

Some teens like to be abused that's why they stay in the relationships.

FACT

No one likes to be controlled or abused! There are many reasons youth stay in abusive relationships. These include:

1. Having a boyfriend or girlfriend is very important to a youth's social status;
2. Wanting to be loved and needed;
3. Believing the abuser's apologies and promises to never do it again; and
4. Peer pressure.

Television, music, movies and other forms of media normalize violence (Aldridge, Friedman, and Occhiuzzo Giggans, 1995).

EVEN WITH THE FACTS, OUR CULTURE STILL DOESN'T WANT TO GET IT

BATTERED: Examining domestic violence, many teens blame Rihanna, say dating violence is normal, 1 in 10 teens suffer abuse in romantic relationships, and many think it's often justified.

By Megan Twohey and Bonnie Miller Rubin are Tribune reporters

Ed Loos, a junior at Lake Forest High School, said a common reaction among students to Chris Brown's alleged attack on Rihanna goes something like this: "Ha! She probably did something to provoke it."

In Chicago, Sullivan High School sophomore Adeola Matanmi has heard the same. "People said, 'I would have punched her around too,'" Matanmi said. "And these were girls!"

As allegations of battery swirl around the famous couple, experts on domestic violence say the response from teenagers just a few years younger shows the desperate need to educate this age group about dating violence.

Their acceptance, or even approval, of abuse in romantic relationships is not a universal reaction. But it comes at a time when 1 in 10 teenagers has suffered such abuse and females ages 16 to 24 experience the highest rates of any age group, research shows.

In recent years, some schools and youth organizations have started educating teens about the dangers of dating violence. Rhode Island and Virginia have adopted laws requiring such instruction in the public schools.

But most states, including Illinois, don't have such a mandate, and education on the topic remains in short supply, experts say. Two of three new programs created by the federal Violence Against Women Act in 2005 to address teen dating violence were never funded.

"This incident has brought the issue into sharp focus," said Esta Soler, president of the California-based Family Violence Prevention Fund. "This type of education is not happening in any broad or consistent way. We need to take it to scale, to make sure it's happening in every community."

Details of the incident between singers Brown and Rihanna are fuzzy, but the story continues to create much buzz among teens across the Chicago area. Because she's 21 and he's 19, many teens see them as peers.

Katie Lullo, a junior at Elk Grove High School, said her classmates and friends were upset. "No one thinks it's right for a guy to hit a girl," she said. And when the topic arose at an after-school program at Evanston's YMCA, many participants said abuse was "bogus."

But other teens insist violence is sometimes justified in relationships.

While young fans have plastered Rihanna's MySpace page with notes of support, many comments on Brown's page express delight at the possibility that he battered a woman.

Kriana Jackson, a sophomore at Sullivan, said it's a sign of a broader culture of acceptance of abuse.

"There was a girl at school this week with a scratch on her eye," Jackson said. "She was talking openly about her boyfriend hitting her, but she was smiling and saying it was funny."

Young people carry these attitudes into adulthood, experts say, and young targets of dating violence are more likely to succumb to aggression in later relationships.

For that reason, experts see education and other prevention initiatives geared at teens / preteens as the best hopes for halting dating and domestic violence.

“We know that education is absolutely crucial to breaking the cycle of abuse and strengthening healthy relationships,” said Candice Hopkins, director of loveisrespect.org, the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, which started in 2007 and receives about 90 contacts a week.

Because young victims move in a different world than that of older people, they require unique interventions.

Text messaging and online social-networking sites, especially popular among teenagers, serve as tools for stalking and harassment. Victims often keep quiet, fearing that if they report another student’s aggressive behavior, they will be socially ostracized—or that their parents will confiscate their cell phone or close a Facebook account.

Teens also can have a harder time severing contact with an abuser. Many are forced to see the perpetrator every day at school, sometimes in the same class. Young adults seeking an order of protection from Cook County judges must bring a guardian to apply on their behalf.

Last summer, the president of the National Association of Attorneys General launched a campaign called “Working Together to End the Violence” and specifically called on communities to focus on relationship abuse among young people. More recently, the Family Violence Prevention Fund launched a national public-service advertising campaign this month called “That’s Not Cool” to help teens recognize digital dating abuse and take steps to prevent it.

The Chicago-based group Between Friends is among the non-profit organizations that go into schools to teach students about the signs of abusive control, why it’s wrong and how to cultivate healthy relationships.

“When we first get there, it’s not unusual for kids—both boys and girls—to say it’s OK to hit your girlfriend or boyfriend,” said Kathy Doherty, the organization’s executive director. “By the time we’re done, they say, yes, it is abuse, and, no, we shouldn’t do that.”

As Doherty and others work to expand such programming, they hope teachers, parents and others use the story about Brown and Rihanna to talk to teens about dating violence.

Loos said his law teacher at Lake Forest recently incorporated the story into class.

But when students brought it up in Chelsea Whitis' economics class at Lane Tech High School in Chicago, the teacher brushed it aside.

"He said the celebrities were getting too much attention and didn't want us to talk about it," Whitis said.

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WHO IS AT RISK?

Unquestionably, the story of Anna Lynn Hurd's murder is tragic but what about all of the other stories that are happening RIGHT NOW? If these statistics are correct, one out of every teen RIGHT NOW is experiencing a rape, a physically violent act, or is CURRENTLY BEING STALKED BY THEIR GIRLFRIEND OR BOYFRIEND. What are we, as a culture doing about it? There was clearly writing on the wall in the weeks leading up to Anna's death. Friends would recount stories of a boyfriend who couldn't tolerate one moment of being alone.

His parents would argue that this is hearsay and while they may threaten lawsuits, the fact remains that this young man felt that it was okay to kill his girlfriend because she was leaving him. If one out of three teen dating relationships involves violent or threatening behavior, how many of those volatile relationships will result in aggravated assault or murder?

WOMEN AGES 16 TO 24 EXPERIENCE THE HIGHEST PER CAPITA RATES OF INTIMATE VIOLENCE--NEARLY 20 PER 1000 WOMEN
(Bureau of Justice Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence, May 2000)

While investigating this case, we arrived at far more questions than answers. We also arrived at some overwhelming but not insurmountable conclusions. While knee deep in evidence and interviews that would put episodes of The Hills to shame, we found a certain magic in the process of parsing out responsibility for what happened to Anna at the hands of her boyfriend. It is difficult to see any magic in a story as gruesome as this one but we must be willing to see the hope that exists in the lives we can still save by taking a sober look at the facts.

TWEEN DATING RELATIONSHIP SURVEY, 2008

from: [break the cycle.org](http://breakthecycle.org) ([click here](#) for more info.)

KEY FINDINGS:

- Dating relationships and dating violence and abuse start by age 11, much earlier than expected.
- 11-14 year olds in relationships report surprising, significant levels of abusive behavior in dating relationships.
- Significant numbers of teens are experiencing emotional and mental abuse and violence in their dating relationships; this is even more alarming among teens who have had sex by the age of 14.
- For the first time, data has revealed an alarming correlation between early sexual experiences and teen dating violence and abuse.
- Sex is considered by tweens and parents to be a normal part of a relationship for 11-14 year old kids!
- A third of all 11-14 year old kids in relationships report that sexual behavior is evident among their friends.
- Today's tween relationship behavior may foreshadow a new wave of abuse among teens in the future.
- Parents think they know what's up, but many don't have any idea.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Teen Research Unlimited (TRU) was commissioned by Fifth & Pacific Companies, Inc. (formerly Liz Claiborne Inc.) and the National Dating Abuse Helpline to conduct quantitative research among tweens (ages 11-14), parents of tweens, and teens (ages 15-18) who have been in a relationship about young dating relationships and the presence/absence of sexual activity and abusive behaviors. TRU is the global leader in youth research and insights, focusing

on tweens, teens and twenty-somethings. For more than 25 years, they have provided the insights that have helped many of the world's most successful companies and organizations develop meaningful connections with young people. Their work has led to the development of countless new products, groundbreaking marketing campaigns, and flourishing brands.

TRU independently sampled the three groups and fielded a customized 15-minute survey online to each group. A total of 2,192 interviews (1,043 tweens, 523 parents, and 626 teens) were completed and processed for analysis.”

There is beauty in the hope that Anna left behind in the notion that WE CAN CHANGE LIVES IF WE LET IT. As a society, we must accept our lumps, our responsibility, and our part of the blame for what is happening to teenagers every single day in this country. To put 100% of the responsibility on the mental health of one individual is ignoring what is CLEARLY happening to teenagers every single day in this country. To put even one ounce of blame onto the victims of these crimes, is shaming the future of our country in ways we, as a people, should be shamed by. While some studies suggest that certain teenagers are more prone to becoming victims of teen dating violence than others, the direct causalities are uncertain. There is still so much to learn as we are thankful to studies like those funded by Find Youth.gov for venturing into research that so few have been willing to talk about until recently:

RISK FACTORS FOR TEEN DATING VIOLENCE VICTIMIZATION

ind youth info.gov ([click here](#) for more info.)

Findings suggest that the frequency and severity of teen dating violence increases with age.² In addition, the likelihood of being subjected to violence in a relationship increases for teens who

- experience stressful life events or show symptoms of trauma (including past history of sexual abuse or prior sexual victimization);
- live in poverty, come from disadvantaged homes, or receive child protective services;
- are exposed to community or neighborhood violence;
- participate in risky behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, alcohol use,

violence);

- begin dating at an early age;
- participate in sexual activity prior to age 16;
- have problem behaviors in other areas;
- have a friend involved in dating violence;
- participate in peer violence or have violent friends;
- believe that dating violence is acceptable or are more accepting of rape myths and violence against women;
- begin menstruating at an early age (for women);
- have been exposed to harsh parenting; inconsistent discipline; or lack supervision, monitoring, and warmth;
- have low self-esteem, anger, or depressed mood;
- use emotional disengagement and confrontational blaming as coping mechanisms;
- exhibit maladaptive or antisocial behaviors;
- have aggressive conflict-management styles; and/or
- have low help-seeking proclivities.

(2) Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, & Kupper, 2009; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011
(3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2005; Halpern et al., 2009; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Rickert & Wiemann, 2008

RISK FACTORS FOR TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PERPETRATION

ind youth info.gov (click here for more info.)

There are also risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of a teen becoming a perpetrator of dating violence. Many of these are developmentally normal in youth, such as little to no relationship experience, vulnerability to peer pressure, and unsophisticated communication skills.⁴ Some additional factors that have been found to be associated with teen dating violence perpetration include

- have problem behaviors in other areas;
- have a friend involved in dating violence;
- participate in peer violence or have violent friends;
- believe that dating violence is acceptable or are more accepting of rape myths and violence against women;

- begin menstruating at an early age (for women);
- have been exposed to harsh parenting; inconsistent discipline; or lack supervision, monitoring, and warmth;
- have low self-esteem, anger, or depressed mood;
- use emotional disengagement and confrontational blaming as coping mechanisms;
- exhibit maladaptive or antisocial behaviors;
- have aggressive conflict-management styles; and/or
- have low help-seeking proclivities.

1 Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011

2 Halpern, Spriggs, Martin, & Kupper, 2009; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011

3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2005; Halpern et al., 2009; Offenhauer & Buchalter, 2011; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001; Rickert & Wiemann, 2008

4 Mulford & Giordano, 2008

5 CDC, 2005

For those who are looking for answers to the question, “is my girlfriend or boyfriend capable of stabbing me to death repeatedly and leaving me out in the snow to bleed to death,” the answer is maybe and as long as the answer is maybe, one must be willing to look at the variables. Are teens coming from abusive homes more likely to offend than teens coming from more traditional families? Studies are inconclusive. Having reviewed studies on child abuse and neglect, research is varied as our society struggles with defining what can be deemed as child abuse and what should be described as just normal parental discipline.

“American teens from across the country are experiencing alarmingly high levels of abuse in their dating relationships, and the economy appears to have made it worse. Nearly half of all teens whose families have experienced economic problems in the past year report having witnessed their parents abusing each other. These teens report a higher incidence of abuse in their own dating relationships.”

break the cycle .org ([click here](#) for more!)

With families still struggling with the financial ramifications of the last two decades, more and more teenagers are left to fend for themselves in ways previous decades never could have imagined. While interviewing friends of Anna and Mark, we were shocked at how much time these teens were left by themselves to figure out life’s lessons without a filter.

In neighborhoods where families struggled to get by on one salary or where both parents were at work, teenagers were less likely to participate in sports and after-school clubs because families simply could not afford the extra expense.

A family's inability to pay for after-school activities can result in the unintentional creation of a social climate that is dictated by teenagers who, more often than not, mimic the relationship hierarchy they witness at home.

If we take into account varying degrees of education and social-standing, we can make limited predictions about what may transpire when teenage emotions are in overdrive. It is this inability to forecast future behavior that makes teen dating violence so difficult to write about. Too many are fearful of getting it wrong, that they unwittingly leave their teenagers susceptible to violence like the type of violence that met Anna Lynn Hurd that fateful night.

But this kind of thing can never happen to me, right? As long as we allow arrogance to factor into our social judgment, we will forever be at risk of someone else's lack of conscience. Part of the evidence we uncovered while sorting out what happened in the weeks leading up to Anna's death, was a boyfriend who no one took seriously.

Some of the friends interviewed expressed not being able to have an enjoyable friendship with Anna because of the pressure and guilt applied by her boyfriend. Too often, teenage girls feel torn between lifelong friendships and the promise of their first romantic relationship. Teenage girls will often waffle between feelings of autonomy and feelings of settling down into the fairy-tales they have grown up watching on TV. When boyfriends apply pressure to this equation, teenage girls will react in a myriad of ways that are highly dependent on their own personal upbringing.

In Anna's case, her upbringing was one of service. Having watched her parents endure a nasty divorce, Anna longed for a more traditional experience than the relationship she witnessed with her mother and father.

Early in life, she learned that acts of service would secure her the admiration of her family and peers. A genuinely good person at heart, both her mother

and father valued Anna for her willingness to see the good in everyone.

**UNDERSTANDING ANNA'S MOTIVATORS WOULD BECOME
A NECESSARY INGREDIENT IN UNDERSTANDING
WHY SHE ALLOWED HERSELF TO BECOME
VICTIMIZED BY HER BOYFRIEND**

We presume that on some level, Anna felt that being everything her boyfriend wanted and needed her to be would make her a better person and provide her with the fairy-tale relationship she had always dreamed of. Instead, no amount of attention would satisfy this young man's never-ending need for her time and affection. Like quicksand, Anna would find herself in a battle for her life because she had never learned the valuable skills necessary to break free from what had become a volatile relationship.

Interviews and Facebook correspondence would reveal Anna's multiple but futile attempts at breaking up with her boyfriend. Friends would recall an equal amount of attempts to talk her out of taking him back. What we discovered was not the typical "abuser" profile. While few were willing to resume the why's as to his possessive behavior, many described a young man who was always just a little bit "off."

THE MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

In the weeks and months following her murder, Anna would be criticized for not having broken the relationship off sooner. No one that we spoke to was willing to talk about why Mark felt the need to be so territorial. No one wanted to talk about the why's surrounding his behavior at all. While it was well known that he was clingy and possessive, few provided reasons or any hypothesis at all for his insecure behavior. Instead the focus would remain on Anna, her family, her problems, and the things SHE COULD HAVE DONE to prevent what happened to her.

WHY WASN'T ANYONE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT MARK?

The fact that no one was willing to talk about why Mark committed this horrific crime is really remarkable. Here is a teenager who based on the police report, had been wielding a knife in front of his friends for weeks. This is a young man who had several public temper tantrums and no one was willing to talk about his family, his upbringing, or the possible reasons why this young man was able to spiral out of control in the brutal fashion that he did. Why? Is it because we are all so afraid of the legal and financial repercussions? While Anna may have been guilty for not ending the relationship sooner, why is the general public not more willing to understand what went into the making of a cold-blooded killer?

Our research reveals several possible motivations with FEAR leading the charge. If fear is our natural way of protecting ego, most cold-blooded killers are groomed from a very young age. Studies show that there are several

factors that play into a criminal mindset. Genetic factors, socio-economic, and environmental factors all converge in varying degrees that sit and simmer until brought to a volatile end.

Most domestic violence offenders, of which Anna's boyfriend is one, learn how to control their loved ones with guilt and fear until the victim is either rendered submissive or dead. While there is no evidence that Anna's boyfriend was physically violent with her prior to her murder, there were plenty of other signs that pointed to a young man who was on the verge of a meltdown.

While Anna's boyfriend's parents were unwilling to talk to us directly about their son, we are able to connect eyewitness accounts of his behavior with studies that reveal a young man who didn't know how to handle rejection. In interviews, no one could argue that Mark didn't love Anna tremendously. His need for her approval, her company, and her support was the foundation he built his entire young adult life on. When she threatened to take that away from him, it is rumored he threatened suicide.

Because of Anna's good nature and kind heart, she would feel guilty and take him back, hoping that he would get better. Instead, Facebook emails between the couple would reveal a tumultuous cycle of fighting and reconciliation that would result in her murder many weeks later.

**“1 IN 10 YOUNG PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE
A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM”**

<http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/youngpeople>

The saddest part of our investigation showed a young man who was aware of his own mental instability. Despite his clear cries for help, teenagers who didn't (nor should they have been expected to) know any better did the best they could to help a young man in a situation that was clearly out of their league.

With the stigma surrounding mental health issues, teenagers are left whispering about issues they should be sounding the alarm about.

Upon the first rumored threat of suicide, this young man should have been offered psychiatric help. Instead, everyone turned a blind eye to this first sign

Why we need to talk....



1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.



9 in 10 will experience discrimination.



Most people feel too awkward to talk about mental health, and 3 in 4 people will lose friends as a result.

of trouble. Whether the rumored threat of suicide was intended to prevent Anna from breaking up with him OR merely a desperate plea from an insecure boyfriend, somebody should have done something to get this young man some help.

What is clear is our society's unwillingness to confront families with the suggestion that a son or daughter is mentally ill. It is much easier to avoid the individual in question or in cases like Anna's, learn how to keep her boyfriend from getting angry. Not wanting to anger him, Anna would go to extreme lengths, even limiting what were once lifelong friendships out of fear of another interrogation.

We wondered if Anna would have ended things sooner had she been introduced to this vital information about abusers and the tricks they use to control and manipulate their partners. We wondered what we could possibly do to get this information into the hands of girls who, like Anna, thought this kind of behavior was acceptable. While her boyfriend did not display EVERY warning sign in the book, he did display enough of these tendencies for her to take extra care in protecting herself during her attempt at getting away from him.



© Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
 Duluth, MN | www.duluth-model.org

“...the public still, overwhelmingly, believes the accused at the expense of accusers.”

Teen Dating Violence and the Subtle (and Not So Subtle) Blaming of Victims

Posted on February 25, 2013 by Wendy Pollack

THE CHARACTER ISSUE

We really shouldn't be surprised at the numbers. In this anything-goes, gratify me NOW culture of objectification and in-your-face reality TV, teenagers are learning useless lessons in how to get noticed. Ripped right out of the local headlines, we wondered if anyone was really surprised by a young man's pride in creating a song about the murder of his unborn child:

“Abusive Boyfriend Charged with Trying to Kill Girlfriend’s Unborn Baby When police booked him, he began, in the police report’s words: “making himself out to be a celebrity, stating, ‘We got a murderer up in here,’” and singing a song he made up about killing the unborn baby. When he was asked if he was sorry for the assault, he said, “Hell naw.” He repeatedly stated that he wanted the baby to die.”

sarah terzo | st. paul, mn | lifenews.com | 7/22/13([click here](#) for entire article)

With teens trying to outdo each other while paying homage to Tosh.0 and movies like Jackass, it is no wonder why we, as a society, have become numb to our own ambivalence. The more we put stupidity on a pedestal the less likely we are to pride ourselves on healthy conflict resolution. If we place such a high value on those in our society who are willing to risk it all for fame and glory, we must question where values and character rank in the qualification, if at all.

Murders like the murder of Anna Lynn Hurd get buried in the 60-second news cycle because lives like hers really don't matter. Neither do the scores of other teenage girls who lost their lives to boys who were too stupid to care about the future of anyone.

MAY 15, 2013

Makayla Lance, age 17
Teenage girl dies after being shot in the face by 18 yr old boyfriend
Pontiac, Michigan ([click here](#))

JUNE 7TH, 2013

Aquilla Flood, age 17
Shot to death by her ex-boyfriend
East Orange County, New Jersey ([click here](#))

JUNE 10TH, 2013

Alyssa Wiles, age 14
Stabbed to death at her home
Oklahoma ([click here](#))

JUNE 27TH, 2013

Erin Schneider, age 17
Stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend
Columbia, Illinois ([click here](#))

JULY 25TH, 2013

Jacqueline Flores, age 17
Shot to death by her ex-boyfriend
Chicago, IL ([click here](#))

MAY 28, 2013

Julianne Siller, age 17
Stabbed to death by 16 yr old boyfriend
Pennsylvania ([click here](#))

JUNE, 29 2013

Emily Anna Asbill, age 19
Died of asphyxiation due to strangulation
Clinton, South Carolina ([click here](#))

MAY 14, 2013

Shaniesha Forbes, age 14
Boyfriend suffocated and burnt her body because he thought she was
pregnant
Maine ([click here](#))

MARCH 9, 2013

Genesis Fonseca, age 17
Stabbed to death by her boyfriend
HIALEAH, Fla ([click here](#))

JUNE 10, 2013

Octavia Shunta Love, age 17
Pregnant teen shot to death by boyfriend.
JACKSON, MS ([click here](#))

AUGUST 1, 2013

Alyssa Oakes, age 19
Boyfriend (21) murders her and buries her in the woods.
Deland, FL ([click here](#))

JUNE 27, 2013

Erin Schneider, age 17
Stabbed to death by ex-boyfriend.
Columbia, Iowa ([click here](#))

and the list continues ... practically invisible to those who aren't directly
related to the girls who have been murdered.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IS NOT A CRIME OF PASSION

A Challenge to the San Jose Police Department
Posted by elisabeth on June 10, 2011
([click here](#) for more information)

“These are not crimes of passion, only crimes of possession”
– Gloria Steinem

Last Friday night, the city of San Jose experienced the 25th homicide of the year. To put that into perspective, the city saw 20 in all of 2010. According to the San Jose Mercury News, the police have been unable to track any pattern in the slayings or explain the dramatic increase. When interviewed, San Jose Police Sergeant Jason Dwyer mentioned that the city has had two or three domestic violence homicides but since they were crimes of passion, they are too difficult to prevent.

I am enraged not only at the idea that the Police Sergeant believes domestic violence homicides are not preventable, but also disappointed at the continued use of the phrase “crimes of passion”, which should have been thrown out a long time ago.

The term “crime of passion” is an old British Common Law term and was developed during a time when passion commonly referred to any very strong emotion, whether positive or negative. In the legal field, the term has been

coined to describe a crime that was not pre-meditated but rather happened in the spur of the moment due to strong emotions.

Perhaps this phrase was appropriate many years ago, but it is time to move on. The connotation around the phrase has morphed into one that romanticizes violence and places the blame on the victim, wherein the batterer's violent response was justified by his emotions. Continued use of this phrase invalidates all of the knowledge that we have acquired over the years regarding domestic violence and its causes. A man who displays his jealousy by causing bruises on his partner's arm is not doing it for her own good or because he loves her. It is about his need for power and control, NOT passion and romance.

Almost more dangerous than portraying domestic violence as a crime of passion is the Police Sergeant's claim that domestic violence is unpreventable. We can put a stop to domestic violence and women can live peaceful lives free from abuse. I know this because I witness such success stories every day.

Is preventing domestic violence difficult? Absolutely. But is there really an alternative to consider? We cannot continue to believe that preventing domestic violence is a lost cause. As much as the San Jose police department likes to believe DV related homicides are isolated incidents, these deaths affect us all. These women are our sisters, our daughters, our friends, and our neighbors. The future successes of our communities are so inherently tied to the health and well-being of our female population and to throw up our hands and hope for the best is simply not good enough.

Today, I challenge the San Jose Police Department to re-consider the use of the phrase "crimes of passion" and to not give up hope for a future free from violence.

We are grateful to organizations like, "New Hope for Women.org" that aren't afraid to expose the tricks most abuser's use in their attempt at controlling their partners. They define Abuser's Tricks as follows:

ABUSER TRICKS

The following is a list of behaviors that may indicate a potential batterer. It is not the purpose of the listing to imply that every person with some of these attributes is a batterer or potential batterer.

JEALOUSY

At the start of the relationship, an abuser will equate jealousy with love. The abuser will question the victim about who the victim talks to, accuse the victim of flirting, or become jealous of time spent with others. The abuser may call the victim frequently during the day, drop by unexpectedly, refuse to let the victim work, check the car mileage, or ask friends to watch the victim.

CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

In the beginning an abuser will attribute controlling behavior to concern for the victim (for example, the victim's safety or decision-making skills). As this behavior progresses the situation will worsen, and the abuser may assume all control of finances or prevent the victim from coming and going freely.

QUICK INVOLVEMENT

A victim often has known or dated the abuser for a brief period of time before getting engaged or living together. The abuser will pressure the victim to commit to the relationship. A victim may be made to feel guilty for wanting to slow the pace or end the relationship.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

An abuser expects the victim to meet all of the abuser's needs, to take care of everything emotionally and domestically.

ISOLATION

An abuser will attempt to isolate the victim by severing the victim's ties to outside support and resources. The batterer will accuse the victim's friends and family of being "trouble makers." The abuser may block the victim's access to use of a vehicle, work, or telephone service in the home.

BLAMES OTHERS FOR PROBLEMS

An abuser will blame others for all problems or for the abuser's own shortcomings. Someone is always out to get the abuser or is an obstacle to the abuser's achievements. The victim or potential victim will be blamed for almost anything.

BLAMES OTHERS FOR FEELINGS

An abuser will use feelings to manipulate the victim. Common phrases to look for: "You're hurting me by not doing what I want." "You control how I feel."

HYPERSENSITIVITY

An abusive person is easily insulted, perceiving the slightest setbacks as personal attacks.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN

This is a person who punishes animals brutally or is insensitive to their pain. The abuser may expect children to perform beyond their capability (for example whipping a two-year-old for wetting a diaper or teasing children or siblings until they cry).

“PLAYFUL” USE OF FORCE IN SEX

This behavior includes restraining partners against their will during sex, acting out fantasies in which the partner is helpless, initiating sex when the partner is asleep, or demanding sex when the partner is ill or tired. The abuser may show little concern for his partner’s wishes and will use sulking and anger to manipulate compliance.

VERBAL ABUSE

This behavior involves saying things that are intended to be cruel and hurtful, cursing or degrading the victim, or putting down the victim’s accomplishments.

RIGID SEX ROLES

The victim, almost always a woman, will be expected to serve. For instance, a male abuser will see women as inferior to men, responsible for menial tasks, stupid, and unable to be a whole person without a relationship.

DUAL PERSONALITY “DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE”

Explosive behavior and moodiness, which can shift quickly to congeniality, are typical of people who beat their partners.

PAST BATTERING

An abuser will beat any partner if the individual is involved with the abuser long enough for the cycle of abuse to begin. Circumstances do not make a person an abusive personality.

THREATS OF VIOLENCE

This consists of any threat of physical force meant to control the partner. Most people do not threaten their mates but an abuser will excuse this behavior by claiming “everyone talks like that.”

BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS

This behavior is used as punishment (breaking sentimental possessions) or to terrorize the victim into submission.

ANY FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT

This may involve an abuser holding down his the victim, physically restraining the victim from leaving, or pushing or shoving. Holding someone back in order to make demands, such as “You will listen to me!” is also a show of force.

WHY ABUSERS ABUSE

In an article published by Bobbie Fuller on Your Tango.com, she calls attention to some of the key reasons why abusers abuse:

Batterers actually blame their girlfriends for forcing them to be violent:

There’s a very good chance that Chris Brown, to this day, blames Rihanna for starting the argument that left him with “no choice” but to attack her. In his mind, she had no right to look at the text message from his manager, Tina Davis. A batterer will tell himself and his girlfriend that SHE provoked the violence by looking at another guy, wearing a skirt that’s too short or not cleaning up the kitchen fast enough.

Guy guilt works. Women blame themselves for provoking their boyfriends:

They get brainwashed into believing that they’ve done something wrong—“it was my fault for leading him to think I was cheating.” Apparently Rihanna blames herself for inciting Chris and has been terribly worried about how the incident and criminal charges could affect his career.

When batterers apologize it’s another form of taking control: Guys who beat up their girlfriends can be dramatically remorseful—crying, begging for forgiveness and promising to never become violent again. Flowers and gifts like Rihanna’s reported “\$50,000 forgiveness” bracelet, can be typical. The apologies can seem so genuine that a battered girlfriend gets completely seduced back into continuing the relationship.

Guys who batter are insecure and have poor impulse control: It's weird. They can seem completely normal and stable at times. At work, they can present themselves as completely nice guys. It's the fear of losing their girlfriend or being unable to control her, that leads to the intense outbursts of rage and violence.

When guys batter they feel entitled to do it: They believe they have the right to use whatever means necessary to take control of the situation. If police arrive, they aren't ashamed of their behavior—they feel justified, i.e., “you deserved it; you were behaving like a slut.”

(click here for the entire article)

It is our opinion that most of the behaviors exhibited by an abuser have either been learned or were enabled at home. While we are uncertain as to whether Anna's boyfriend could be considered a “troubled” teen by professional standards, we know that this young man had obvious issues with abandonment. It would be easy for anyone to call Anna's murder a crime of passion, we are convinced more work needs to be done in order to prevent teenagers from thinking the acceptable way of handling any disappointment is violence. The light sentencing this young man would receive for the death of young woman in the prime of her life, does little to help prevention efforts. He will still have plenty of years in front of him to rebuild and enjoy life while generations will suffer in the wake of the tragedy he created.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE IS INFLUENCED BY HOW THEY LOOK AT THEMSELVES AND OTHERS

YOUNG MEN MAY BELIEVE:

- they have the right to “control” their female partners
- “masculinity” is physical aggressiveness
- they “possess” their partner.
- they should demand intimacy.
- they may lose respect if they are attentive and supportive toward their girlfriends

The Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence
(click here for more information)

For those of us wanting to get to the bottom of why teen offenders REALLY feel they are entitled to offend, we encourage you to examine the role of parents who enable all sorts of bad behavior on the part of their teenage children. Until parents start wanting to instill core ethical values byway of hands-on parenting, we as a society will always run the risk of another teen dating violence scenario.

ENABLING TROUBLED TEENS

HOW PARENTS UNKNOWINGLY CONTRIBUTE TO TEEN PROBLEMS BY HELPING THEM TOO MUCH

From Kathryn Rudlin, LCSW ([click here](#) for the entire article)

The previous examples describe relatively minor versions of enabling and its consequences, but this behavior can become detrimental to a teen when it subtly encourages damaging behavior. To better understand the problems inherent to enabling, consider whether you have ever:

- Agreed to lie when your teen missed school or work, such as calling in sick on their behalf?
- Let your teen return home after running away without receiving any punishment?
- Avoided confronting your teen when chores weren't completed due to concerns about their response?
- Chosen to believe your teens' stories about what they're doing because you don't really want to know the truth?
- Not expressed to your teen serious concerns about their mood or behavior?
- Loaned your teen money knowing it will probably never be returned?

- Ignored possible signs of teen drug use or self-harm?
- Agreed to your teens' request to keep information from the other parent?

UNDERSTANDING THE DANGERS OF ENABLING

If you answered yes to any of these examples then your attempts to be helpful may in fact be hurting your teen in the long run. For troubled teens, when the consequences of their problems are mitigated because someone else is willing to make things easier for them, it's going to take much longer to recognize the seriousness of their problems and the necessity of making positive changes.

Ironically, a parents' loving and well intended efforts to help can mean a teen may end up suffering more in the long term. The dangers of enabling can be difficult to digest, but parents who begin to recognize these behaviors will help their teen more by backing off and allowing the consequences to unfold in ways that will ultimately help your teen to heal.

DIGITAL HARASSMENT

Interviews with close friends of the couple would reveal a boyfriend who would send hundreds of texts a day. While most seemed innocent enough, the sheer volume and expectation for a response was enough to burden a grown adult.

For those who brush off the severity of what can be defined as digital harassment, we encourage you to look at the facts.

“Digital harassment also warns of a deeper pattern of abuse offline. Victims are 2 times as likely to be physically abused, 2.5 times as likely to be psychologically abused, and 5 times as likely to be sexually coerced.”
urban.org ([click here](#) for more info)

WHAT IS DIGITAL HARASSMENT?

- Digital harassment is when kids and teens use cell phones, social networks, and other communications devices to bully, threaten, and aggressively badger someone. While it's a form of cyber bullying, "digital harassment" is a bit different because it usually takes place between two people in a romantic relationship.
- Certainly, lots of young people conduct healthy relationships and use their online and mobile lives to stay connected to each other. But not all relationships are balanced -- especially with teens, whose emotional lives run at peak speeds.
- Some relationships can become manipulative and controlling, and teens use the digital devices at their disposal to act out. A few texts a day can turn into a few hundred. Relentless and unreasonable demands escalate. The abuser presses for things like the other person's passwords (so they can check up on them) and sexy photos and forces their significant other to unfriend people whom the abuser doesn't like. They may spread lies, impersonate someone, or even resort to blackmail."

Common Sense Media.org

Teens may be asking themselves what they can do to prevent or stop digital harassment from happening to them. Thanks to organizations like, "Love is Respect.org," extensive research has enabled them to help teens in time of trouble. They provide the following advice for teens experiencing digital harassment:

WHAT CAN I DO?

Whether you feel like your partner is already using their cell phone in an abusive way or you're trying to prevent it, here are tips to keep you safe and healthy:

- Remember, it's ok to turn off your phone. Just be sure your parent or guardian knows how to contact you in an emergency.
- Don't answer calls from unknown or blocked numbers. Your abuser can easily call you from another line if they suspect you are avoiding them.

- Don't respond to hostile, harassing, abusive or inappropriate texts or messages. Responding can encourage the person who sent the message and won't get them to stop. Your messages might also get you in trouble and make it harder to get a restraining order or file a criminal report.
- Save or document troublesome texts as you may need them later for evidence in case you file a criminal report or ask for a restraining order.
- Many phone companies can block up to ten numbers from texting or calling you. Contact your phone company or check their website to see if you can do this on your phone.
- If you are in or coming out of a dangerous relationship, avoid using any form of technology to contact your abuser. It can be dangerous and may be used against you in the future.
- It may seem extreme, but if the abuse and harassment don't stop, changing your phone number may be your best option.

If you are feeling threatened or suffocated by your partner's constant calls or texts, it may be a sign that you are in an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship. When your partner says or does things that make you afraid, lowers your self-esteem or manipulates you, it is called verbal or emotional abuse. You have the right to be in a safe and healthy relationship free from all types of abuse."

Thanks to the efforts of organizations like "That's Not Cool.com," teens are even better equipped with tools that really work at bringing awareness to digital harassment.

"Your cell phone, IM, and online profile are all digital extensions of who you are. When someone you're with pressures or disrespects you in those places, that's not cool. That's Not Cool provides tools to help you draw your digital line about what is, or is not, okay in your relationships.

That's Not Cool is a national public education campaign that uses digital examples of controlling, pressuring, and threatening behavior to raise awareness about and prevent teen dating abuse. That's Not Cool is sponsored and co-created by Futures Without Violence (formerly Family Violence

Prevention Fund), the Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women, and the Advertising Council.

FEATURES

Pressure to Share Passwords...Cool or Not Cool?



How would you feel about getting pressured to share your online passwords with someone you're dating?

This question is posed in the latest video to be released by **That's Not Cool** as part of the speaking avatar application. Launched last year, the speaking avatar tool encourages teens to have their say when it comes to pressure and control in their relationships. After watching an animated prompt video addressing digital dating abuse on the homepage, users create a personalized character and voice to respond to the question posed in the video. Each unique video entry can be posted and shared on www.thatsnotcool.com.

The newest prompt video was released today to coincide with National Teen Dating Violence Prevention & Awareness Month, and asks users to respond to the question: "Sharing passwords with your boyfriend or girlfriend...Cool or not cool?" The video offers an opportunity for the campaign to represent a diversity of youth relationships as it features a lesbian couple.

"The avatar tool is a personal and fun way for teens to engage in this important issue and talk about what is and isn't cool in their relationships," said Futures Without Violence Director of Public Education Campaigns & Programs Brian

O'Connor. "We're particularly excited to be featuring a same-sex couple in the newest prompt video because we know that any teen can experience digital dating abuse, regardless of sexual orientation and other markers like, race or class."

That's Not Cool was developed by Futures Without Violence in partnership with the **Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women** and the **Advertising Council**. The That's Not Cool campaign is an award winning national public education initiative that educates youth about healthy relationships, encourages them to draw their own digital line, and helps young people recognize, avoid, and prevent dating violence in their lives.

Since That's Not Cool launched in 2009, the website has been viewed more than 1,200,000 times. To learn more about the campaign, visit www.thatsnotcool.com, and be sure to follow us on **Facebook** and **Twitter** for the latest campaign updates."

SOCIAL MEDIA & TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

If you suspect that a friend or loved one is experiencing teen dating violence, it is important to consider how your social media behavior will impact their safety. A big thank you to the ongoing efforts of Love is Respect.org. They outline these important things to consider when connecting with friends online:

“CHECK-INS”

There are many situations where it's not only fun but practical to check-in with Gowalla, Foursquare, Facebook, etc. As useful as this technology is, did you ever stop to wonder, is it safe?

For someone in or getting out of an abusive relationship, the answer is often no. It can be dangerous if your abusive partner only has to log-in to Foursquare or Facebook to see where you are, what you're doing and who you're with.

So try to be mindful of how to use check-ins -- whether you're in a healthy relationship or not. If you or a friend are in an unhealthy relationship, consider the following before checking in:

ALWAYS ASK

Always ask everyone if it's alright to check them in, even if you are sure it was ok a week ago. If anyone in your group says no, consider playing it safe and not checking in at all. You don't want an abusive partner figuring out who

else is there based on the group you posted.

UPDATE YOUR PRIVACY SETTINGS

Facebook, Foursquare and Gowalla all let you control who sees your check-ins, but they default to making your account public. Consider adjusting your settings so only your friends, not the general public, can see your check-ins. Remember, though, that abusive partners may find a way around your settings.

KNOW YOUR NETWORKS

Just because you're not friends with the abusive person doesn't mean you're not friends with their friends. If you think sensitive information could be accessed by your contacts a few friends away, just side with caution and don't post.

PAY ATTENTION TO STATUSES AND TWEETS TOO

Be aware that tagging someone in a status or tweet could create problems for them too, especially if you give away their location. Learn more about social networking safety.

WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE EVENT

If you're posting about a one-time event that you really want to celebrate online, give it a day or two until you mention it. That way, the abusive person is less likely to use the information against you and your friends.

If you want to talk about cautious check-ins or other ways to support a friend in an abusive relationship, chat with a peer advocate.”

If your partner is digitally abusive, know their behavior is not acceptable and could be illegal. Check out our tips below for staying safe on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare and others.

- Only post things you want the public to see or know. Once it's online, it's no longer under your control.
- Be protective of your personal information. Your phone numbers and addresses enable people to contact you directly, and things like your birth date, the schools you attended, your employer and photos with landmarks may make it easier for someone to find where you live, hang out or go to school.
- Set boundaries and limits. Tell people not to post personal information, negative comments or check-ins about you on social media. Ask people not to post or tag pictures if you're not comfortable with it.
- You can keep your passwords private -- sharing passwords is not a requirement of being in a relationship.
- Don't do or say anything online you wouldn't in person. It may seem easier to express yourself when you are not face-to-face, but online communication can have real-life negative consequences.

ABUSE OR HARASSMENT

- Don't respond to harassing, abusive or inappropriate comments. It won't make the person stop and it could get you in trouble or even put you in danger.
- Keep a record of all harassing messages, posts and comments in case you decide to tell the police or get a restraining order.
- Always report inappropriate behavior to the site administrators.

LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

- If you are leaving an unhealthy relationship, start by blocking your ex on Facebook and other social networking pages. We recommend you don't check-in on Foursquare or other location-based sites or apps -- you don't want your ex or their friends tracking your movements.
- Adjust your privacy settings to reduce the amount of information that particular people can see on your page. Privacy settings on sites like Facebook allow the user to control how their information is shared and who has access to it. Remember, registering for some apps require you to change your privacy settings.
- Avoid posting private details on your friend's pages. They may not have appropriate settings and doing so may allow someone to see your

movements and location. The same goes for tagging yourself in pictures.

- Consider what is called a “super-logoff” -- deactivating your Facebook account every time you log off and reactivating it every time you log back on. This way, no one can post on your wall, tag you or see your content when you’re offline, but you still have all of your friends, wall posts, photos, etc. when you log back on.
- While it is inconvenient and may seem extreme, disabling your social networking page entirely may be your best option to stop continued abuse or harassment.

YOUR FRIENDS’ SAFETY

If your friend is in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful what you post about them. Pictures, locations, check-ins -- even simple statements can be used to control or hurt them. If you’re unsure of what’s ok to post, get your friend’s permission before you click “Share.”

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

HEALTHY OR UNHEALTHY?

from: [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

There is conflict in all relationships. And by “conflict,” we specifically mean verbal disagreements and arguments. People disagree and that isn’t necessarily a bad thing. In fact, you have the right to a different opinion from your partner.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

In a healthy relationship, communication is key. When you communicate effectively, you understand your partner better and make your relationship stronger. When you can resolve conflicts successfully, you are developing a healthy, mature relationship. While conflict is normal, it can also be a sign that parts of your relationship aren’t working. If your conflict is based on which movie to see, what friends to hang out with or who should do the dishes, then use the tips below to help resolve these arguments in a healthy way:

- **Set Boundaries.** Everyone deserves to be treated with respect -- even during an argument. If your partner curses at you, calls you names or ridicules you, tell them to stop. If they don’t, walk away and tell them that you don’t want to continue arguing right now.
- **Find the Real Issue.** Typically, arguments happen when one partner’s wants are not being met. Try to get to the heart of the matter. If your

partner seems needy, maybe they are just feeling insecure and need your encouragement. If you're angry that your partner isn't taking out the trash, maybe you're really upset because you feel like you do all the work around the house. Learn to talk about what the real issue is so you can avoid constant fighting.

- **Agree to Disagree.** If you and your partner can't resolve an issue, sometimes it's best to drop it. You can't agree on everything. Focus on what matters. If the issue is too important for you to drop and you can't agree to disagree, then maybe you're not really compatible.
- **Compromise When Possible.** Easy to say but hard to do, compromising is a major part of conflict resolution and any successful relationship. So your partner wants Chinese food and you want Indian? Compromise and get Chinese tonight, but Indian next time you eat out. Find a middle ground that can allow both of you to feel satisfied with the outcome.
- **Consider Everything.** Is this issue really important? Does it change how the two of you feel about each other? Are you compromising your beliefs or morals? If yes, it's important that you really stress your position. If not, maybe this is a time for compromise. Also, consider your partner's arguments. Why are they upset? What does the issue look like from their point of view? Is it unusual for your partner to get this upset? Does your partner usually compromise? Are you being inconsiderate?

Still arguing? If you try these tips but still argue constantly, consider breaking up. You both deserve a healthy relationship without so much conflict.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

While conflict is normal, your arguments shouldn't devolve into degrading or humiliating comments. If you can't express yourself without fear of retaliation, you may be experiencing abuse. Learn more about verbal abuse and how to draw the line between it and normal disagreements.

Remember, one sign of an abusive relationship is a partner who tries to control or manipulate you. Is your boyfriend or girlfriend upset because:

- You went to basketball practice instead of spending time with them?
- They checked your phone and didn't like the texts or calls you received?

- You're just hanging out with friends but they think you're cheating?
- You're not ready to have sex?
- You're trying to study but they want to talk?

If you argue about these things, we encourage you to take the healthy relationship quiz to see if you are really in a healthy relationship.

HOW CAN WE COMMUNICATE BETTER?

(continued from [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org))

Part of being in a healthy relationship is having good communication. Use the guidelines below to open up the channels of communication between you and your partner. If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, be careful using these tips. You know your relationship best. If any of these tips would put you in danger, don't try them.

For healthier communication, try to:

Find the Right Time. If something is bothering you and you would like to have a serious conversation about it, make sure you pick the right time to talk. Don't interrupt your partner when they're watching a sports game, TV show, about to go to sleep or stressed about an upcoming test. Tell your partner you would like to talk later and find a time when you're in the same room and not doing anything important. Don't start serious conversations in public places unless you don't feel safe.

Talk Face to Face. Avoid talking about serious matters or issues in writing. Text messages, letters and emails can be misinterpreted. Talk in person so there aren't any unnecessary miscommunications.

Do Not Attack. Even when we mean well, we can sometimes come across as harsh because of our word choice. Using "you" can sound like you're attacking, which will make your partner defensive and less receptive to your message. Instead, try using "I" or "we." For example, say "I feel like we haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant with me."

Be Honest. Agree to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's the key to a healthy relationship. Admit that you aren't always perfect and apologize

when you make a mistake instead of making excuses. You will feel better and it will help strengthen your relationship.

CHECK YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Make eye contact when speaking. Sit up and face your partner. Let your partner know you're listening. Show them you really care. Don't take a phone call, text or play a video game when you're talking. Listen and respond. Use the 48 Hour Rule. If your partner does something that makes you angry, you need to tell them about it. But you don't have to do so right away. If you're still hurt 48 hours later, say something. If not, consider forgetting about it. But remember your partner can't read your mind. If you don't speak up when you're upset, there is no way for them to apologize or change. Once you do mention your hurt feelings and your partner sincerely apologizes, let it go. Don't bring up past issues if they're not relevant.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE IF YOU ARE ANGRY

- **Stop.** If you get really angry about something, stop, take a step back and breathe. Give yourself time to calm down by watching TV, talking to a friend, playing a video game, taking a walk, listening to some music or whatever helps you relax. Taking a break can keep the situation from getting worse.
- **Think.** After you're no longer upset, think about the situation and why you got so angry. Was it how your partner spoke or something they did? Figure out the real problem then think about how to explain your feelings.
- **Talk.** Finally, talk to your partner and when you do, follow the tips above.
- **Listen.** After you tell your partner how you feel, remember to stop talking and listen to what they have to say. You both deserve the opportunity to express how you feel in a safe and healthy environment.

Communicating isn't always easy. At first, some of these tips may feel unnatural or awkward, but they will help you communicate better and build a healthy relationship.

WHEN LOVE TURNS TO VIOLENCE

Throughout our investigation as to the why's of this tragedy, the question inevitably became, "if Anna's boyfriend loved her SO MUCH, why did he kill her?" It is difficult to provide just one reason why Anna's threat to move to Texas triggered this young man into a fit of rage that would cost Anna her life. Interviews would suggest that Anna's inability to make up her mind regarding the move and whether she would take him with her, would toy with this young man's emotions until the breaking point.

But why murder? Why did he murder her during THAT fight on THAT night? The couple had been witnessed arguing for weeks and months prior. Anna had tried to break up with her boyfriend MANY times in the past and reconsidered. Why did her boyfriend feel that Anna was serious THIS TIME? The answer to that question has as much to do with Anna's stress response, as it does with her boyfriend's.

Anna was at a pivotal point in her psychological development as her own life choices were coming to a head. Arguments with her parents about her move to Texas, trouble at school, and problems with a desperate and clingy boyfriend, were all factors in why Anna felt the need to escalate an already dangerous situation on the night of her murder.

Police reports indicate that Anna would make a call to her ex-boyfriend only minutes prior to her murder. Anna's boyfriend would tell officers that Anna told him that she was getting back together with an old boyfriend.

Having interviewed the ex-boyfriend, we came to learn that there really

wasn't a plan for the two to get back together and that perhaps, Anna might have told her boyfriend this awful news as a way of finally putting a nail in the coffin of her relationship without recognizing the risk she was posing to her own safety.

Why would Anna have taken that risk? She knew that her boyfriend carried a knife and she knew that he was becoming more and more desperate for ways he could convince her to take him with her.

Why would she underestimate his willingness to use the knife he had been brandishing for months? It is our thought that a culture of complacency about boys and their "toys" is what contributed to Anna's miscalculated judgment that night.

DANGEROUS WEAPONS

**"NO MATTER WHICH SIDE YOU STAND ON IN THE GUN DEBATE,
IT'S PRETTY WELL KNOWN A WHOLE HOST
OF WEAPONS EXIST IN AMERICA."**

business insider.com ([click here](#) for more)

Throughout the course of our investigation, we had to wonder if knives could be considered the gateway drug to other dangerous behavior.

Of course we are not arguing that teenagers shouldn't have the right to protect themselves but to what extent?

Most of the people we interviewed would agree that the knives carried by many of the boys in their social circle were merely props. No one thought in a million years that it would wind up costing any one of them their lives.

"Adolescence is a time of violent, primitive emotions, of play-acting and the most intensely lived reality. Boys' passionate assertion of relative worth is developmentally necessary. That child's place in the society of his peers is, for that moment, a matter of life and death."

Boys of the early '60s were far more likely to be scared of authority."

-Maira Rayner

Homepage Daily.com
([click here](#) for more)

With more and more families where both parents are forced into the workplace and with the increase of single-family homes, there is no authority to really be scared of.

Watch how actress [Chloë Grace Moretz](#) shows off her butterfly knife skills

“Hollywood youngsters are really making me feel untalented. Not only can they dance, sing, or act, but now they can yield knives too?”

Jill O'Rourke

If knives are the cool thing to know how to use and they are so easy to obtain, it is no wonder we are seeing an increase in the amount of stabbing deaths. The question we have is why we are not educating more of our teenage girls on how to defend themselves from their knife-wielding boyfriends? Perhaps females should start taking some tips from Chloe Moretz.

ANIMAL CRUELTY

A close friend of the couple reports that just the day before, the boyfriend had angrily injured Anna's kitten in a fit of rage allegedly because Anna wasn't giving him the answers he was looking for.

In an article published in Psychology Today (April 27, 2011) the psychology behind animal abuse is clearly defined:

“MOTIVATIONS BEHIND ANIMAL CRUELTY”

Most commonly, children who abuse animals have either witnessed or experienced abuse themselves. For example, statistics show that 30 percent of children who have witnessed domestic violence act out a similar type of violence against their pets.

In fact, the link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence is so well-known that many U.S. communities now cross-train social-service and animal-control agencies in how to recognize signs of animal abuse as possible indicators of other abusive behaviors.

While childhood and adolescent motives for animal cruelty has not been well-researched, interviews suggest a number of additional developmentally related motivations:

- Rehearsal for interpersonal violence (i.e., “practicing” violence on stray animals or pets before engaging in violent acts against other people.
- Vehicle for emotional abuse (for example, injuring a sibling's pet to frighten the sibling),”

ANIMAL CRUELTY: ARE THERE TYPES OF ABUSERS?

I'm not aware of any formal typologies that exist for children who abuse animals. However, as a rule of thumb, it may be useful to use the following guidelines in trying to assess whether or not the problem is serious or can be easily addressed. Caveat: These are general guidelines and each situation should be evaluated individually.

The Conduct-Disordered Abuser: (12+) Teens who abuse animals almost always engage in other antisocial behaviors - substance abuse, gang activities, Sometimes the animal abuse is in conjunction with a deviant peer group (an initiation rite or as a result of peer pressure), while other times it may be used as a way to alleviate boredom or achieve a sense of control.

What to do: Get professional help immediately. If possible, enlist the support of friends, family members, even teachers.”

Knowing that her boyfriend was capable of hurting an animal should have prepared Anna for what happened the night of her death. Unfortunately, the chronic nature of their fighting and getting back together would set the stage that the couple had grown too accustomed to. At this stage, these actors were two ticking time bombs on the verge of catastrophe when one decided to no longer play the part.

“Calling dating violence a pattern doesn’t mean the first instance of abuse is not dating violence. It just recognizes that dating violence usually involves a series of abusive behaviors over a course of time.”

teen dv month.org

DEFINING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Love is Respect.org defines emotional abuse as any non-physical behavior that includes threats, insults, constant monitoring or “checking in,” excessive texting, humiliation, intimidation, isolation or stalking.

There are many behaviors that qualify as emotional or verbal abuse:

- Calling you names and putting you down.
- Yelling and screaming at you.
- Intentionally embarrassing you in public.
- Preventing you from seeing or talking with friends and family.
- Telling you what to do and wear.
- Using online communities or cell phones to control, intimidate, or humiliate you.
- Blaming your actions for their abusive or unhealthy behavior.
- Stalking you.
- Threatening to commit suicide to keep you from breaking up with them.
- Threatening to harm you, your pet, or people you care about.
- Making you feel guilty or immature when you don’t consent to sexual activity.
- Threatening to expose your secrets such as your sexual orientation or immigration status.
- Starting rumors about you.
- Threatening to have your children taken away.

While interviews would suggest that Anna’s boyfriend displayed several of the behaviors above, we were left wondering why more wasn’t done to get him the support he really needed. Instead, it was easier for most who knew this young man to make Anna the excuse for his poor behavior and just hope for the best while things quickly spiraled out of control.

Again, we must put ourselves in the shoes of teenagers who are knee-deep in their own struggles and families who have a hard enough time keeping above

water financially, to really attend to the emotional health needs of a child who was not their own.

Even more tragic, Anna's response to her own struggles at school would deem her unable to attend the class that could have provided her with the skills to handle her boyfriend more effectively during the argument that wound up costing her, her life. In this class, she might have been able to validate the feelings that had been brewing for months prior to her death. This validation could have driven her to take more aggressive steps to end the relationship.

Love is Respect.org identifies an abusive partner as any partner who gets upset by the following:

- You went to basketball practice instead of spending time with them?
- They checked your phone and didn't like the texts or calls you received?
- You're just hanging out with friends but they think you're cheating?
- You're not ready to have sex?
- You're trying to study but they want to talk?

WHY DO PEOPLE STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS?

“ ‘Why doesn’t she just leave?’ or ‘Why does the victim stay?’ The better question to ask here is ‘Why does the abuser do this?’ In fact, the focus on the survivor and why they do not leave is part of the larger pattern of victim-blaming.”

men against abuse now ([click here](#) for more)

We are hopeful with regard to the efforts put forth by organizations like Men Against Abuse Now to change the focus of the teen dating violence conversation to the actions of the abuser. While we wait for more studies to be done on why abusers abuse, we discovered eye-opening information as to why so many victims like Anna stay with the guys who hurt or kill them:

Why Do People Stay in Abusive Relationships?

From: Love is Respect.org

People who have never been abused often wonder why a person wouldn’t just leave. They don’t understand that breaking up can be more complicated than it seems.

There are many reasons why both men and women stay in abusive relationships. If you have a friend in an unhealthy relationship, support them by understanding why they may choose to not leave immediately.

CONFLICTING EMOTIONS

- **Fear:** Your friend may be afraid of what will happen if they decide to leave the relationship. If your friend has been threatened by their partner, family or friends, they may not feel safe leaving.
- **Believing Abuse is Normal:** If your friend doesn't know what a healthy relationship looks like, perhaps from growing up in an environment where abuse was common, they may not recognize that their relationship is unhealthy.
- **Fear of Being Outed:** If your friend is in same-sex relationship and has not yet come out to everyone, their partner may threaten to reveal this secret. Being outed may feel especially scary for young people who are just beginning to explore their sexuality.
- **Embarrassment:** It's probably hard for your friend to admit that they've been abused. They may feel they've done something wrong by becoming involved with an abusive partner. They may also worry that their friends and family will judge them.
- **Low Self-esteem:** If your friend's partner constantly puts them down and blames them for the abuse, it can be easy for your friend to believe those statements and think that the abuse is their fault.
- **Love:** Your friend may stay in an abusive relationship hoping that their abuser will change. Think about it -- if a person you love tells you they'll change, you want to believe them. Your friend may only want the violence to stop, not for the relationship to end entirely.

RELIANCE ON THE ABUSIVE PARTNER

- **Lack of Money:** Your friend may have become financially dependent on their abusive partner. Without money, it can seem impossible for them to leave the relationship.
- **Nowhere to Go:** Even if they could leave, your friend may think that they have nowhere to go or no one to turn to once they've ended the relationship. This feeling of helplessness can be especially strong if the person lives with their abusive partner.

Eyewitness accounts would describe a grief filled conversation Anna had with her father on the afternoon prior to her murder. For reasons that could never be fully explained, Anna would not be welcome back to stay with her father.

Speculation would revolve around a father's normal distaste for a boyfriend who had taken so much of Anna's time. Include Anna's latest decision to move back to Texas with her mother and you have a hostile home environment that led to Anna making the fatal decision to walk home with Mark that night.

While it is easy for so many to make quick judgments about what decisions were made when, we must be willing to put ourselves in each one of their shoes. NO ONE wants to be Anna's parents. Both parents shoulder SO MUCH of the burden of having made choices that backed Anna into such a dark corner. Friends of the couple feel burdened for not having forced Anna to stay at the party that night.

The friend who witnessed the abuse against Anna's kitten blames herself for not contacting the authorities.

So many people, who were close to the couple, shoulder the responsibility that ultimately should really reside on the shoulders of her boyfriend.

Too many people are too willing to point fingers everywhere else while those closest to the case were left wondering, "What happened to the justice that should have been served in this case?" The sentence this young man would receive is in our estimation, laughable. He will serve 22 years in prison with an opportunity to be released in 13 years for good behavior. We shouldn't be surprised. Teenage girls who come from high-risk families are marginalized every single day of the week. Are we ready as a society to REALLY talk about how a teenager, like Anna, can be identified as, "high risk"?

Anna had been singled out many months prior when she was suspended from school. Not having the tools or the emotional support to handle crisis, Anna would be expected to go to bat for everyone else BUT herself.

In her mind, we presume that Anna needed to be everyone's champion in order to quell an insecurity that was brought about by family turmoil. The specifics of that turmoil would be documented in divorce paperwork and court-issued parenting plans.

"In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are at high risk of suffering physical abuse themselves. Regardless of whether children are physically

abused or not, the emotional effects of witnessing domestic violence are very similar to the psychological trauma associated with being a victim of child abuse. Each year, an estimated minimum of 3.3 million children witness domestic violence.”

new hope for women.org ([click here](#) for more info)

Out of RESPECT for Anna and a now murdered teenage girl’s family, it is important that we focus on the REAL perpetrator and how this young man came to the conclusion that his life was more important than hers because ANNA will never get another chance, he will.

DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO FITS THIS DESCRIPTION?

“Studies show that people who harm their dating partners are more depressed and are more aggressive than peers. Other factors that increase risk for harming a dating partner include: • Trauma symptoms • Alcohol use • Having a friend involved in dating violence • Having problem behaviors in other areas • Belief that dating violence is acceptable • Exposure to harsh parenting • Exposure to inconsistent discipline • Lack of parental supervision, monitoring, and warmth.”

Centers For Disease Control And Prevention
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention

In an article published by, “The Huffington Post,” Editor at Large Liz Brody @ Glamour magazine describes the less obvious signs of a potentially abusive partner:

TELL SOMEBODY: 10 SURPRISING SIGNS YOU’RE DATING AN ABUSIVE GUY

([click here](#) to read the entire article)

WATCH OUT IF YOUR GUY:

- Is so crazy about you he wants to settle in as soon as you meet.
- Is really, weirdly jealous. (He should be uncomfortable if you go away for the weekend with your ex-boyfriend, but if he accuses you off flirting with every guy you encounter -- the waiter, the cashier, a gay buddy – it's a red flag)
- Texts so much, it sometimes creeps you out.
- Doesn't think your friends and family value you enough, or even at all.

ALSO WATCH OUT IF:

- You are always tired because he keeps you up at night.
- You're always explaining to people "I can't go."
- Your anxiety soars if you're just a few minutes late -- you know how upset he'll be.
- Things are always your fault.
- You get a lot of apology emails or make-up gifts from him.
- You find you don't do anything without him, or without him approving of it.

RUN IF:

- You find out he had a violent relationship with a former girlfriend.
- He stalks you -- at work, online, with GPS in your car.
- He beats up a teammate or has a punch-out in a bar.
- He's ever been cruel to animals.
- He is ever physically violent to you.

ARE YOU ABUSIVE?

(WE RESPECT YOU FOR DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT)

from: [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

If you're being abusive toward your partner, the first and hardest part of changing is admitting your behavior is wrong. It's very important to take responsibility for the problem and get help to end it. If you've already taken this step, you're on the right track.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Changing abusive behavior is a long and hard process that you cannot do alone. Though you may not know it, you rely on your beliefs and attitudes to justify your abusive behavior. With help, you can change and learn how to treat your partner with true respect. It's extremely important that you get professional help through this process. Chat with a peer advocate to find services in your local area.

Remember that physical and sexual violence aren't the only types of abuse. You may be harming your partner in verbal or emotional ways, like through intimidation, threats, isolation or other means of control. You should take steps to end ALL the types of abuse now. Addressing the roots of your behavior will take time, but if you want a healthy relationship, you need to make the commitment to change immediately.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Remember, violence is always a choice. There are no excuses and no one else to blame for being abusive.
- Focus on how your abuse affects your partner, family and children. Fully accept how seriously you have hurt the people you care about.
- Accept the consequences of your actions. Your partner has the right to get help from police or the courts. You may face legal consequences for being abusive, either with jail time or a restraining order.
- Remember you are not alone. Your friends and family can support you

through the difficult process of changing.

- Get help from a program that focuses on abusive relationships. A good program will help you stop being abusive and create a better relationship for you and your partner.
- Respect your partner's right to be safe and healthy as you work toward change, even if it means you can't be together.
- Because change is hard, there may be times when you may justify your actions or feel like giving up. Remember your original commitment to change and you'll be more likely to succeed.

Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships (Start Strong) is the largest initiative ever funded to prevent teen dating violence and abuse by teaching 11- to- 14-year-olds about healthy relationships. This innovative approach to prevention is rallying entire communities to promote healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence in middle schools. We are bringing together

FOR EDUCATORS

Examples of Teen Dating Violence Prevention Programs

Start Strong: Building Healthy Teen Relationships (Start Strong) is the largest initiative ever funded to prevent teen dating violence and abuse by teaching 11- to- 14-year-olds about healthy relationships. This innovative approach to prevention is rallying entire communities to promote healthy relationships and prevent teen dating violence in middle schools. We are bringing together a wide variety of partners in 11 communities across the country to tackle this issue and to empower young people to support safe and healthy relationships and ensure violence and abuse are never tolerated. ([click here for more info.](#))

Safe Dates is the only evidence-based curriculum that prevents dating abuse: a factor often linked to alcohol and other drug use. Highly engaging and interactive, Safe Dates helps teens recognize the difference between caring, supportive relationships and controlling, manipulative, or abusive dating relationships. Designated as a Model Program by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In 2006, Safe Dates was selected for the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP),

and received high ratings on all criteria.

Break the Cycle's Ending Violence Curriculum empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence. Ending Violence is an interactive curriculum designed to teach teens how to prevent or end abusive relationships, while helping them to build healthy relationships. It works well as a supplement to Safe Dates or as a stand-alone program for high school students. (click here for more info.)

The 4th R is an interactive classroom curriculum that aims to reduce youth dating violence by addressing youth violence and bullying, unsafe sexual behavior, and substance use. The program is given to 9th grade high school students in a classroom setting.(click here for more info.)

The Youth Relationships Project - This research project targets the prevention of violence in relationships. It is argued that child abuse, spouse abuse and sexual violence towards women share a related developmental course which is not inevitable. If well-planned alternative sources of information and experience are provided to adolescents who come from abusive families then there is a substantial possibility of reducing future victimization and offenses. (click here for more info.)

Shifting Boundaries is an intervention designed to reduce the incidence and prevalence of dating violence and sexual harassment among adolescents. The intervention consists of two parts: a classroom-based curricula and a schoolwide component.(click here for more information)

“Love is Not Abuse” is a free curriculum sponsored by Liz Claiborne, Inc., developed by professionals in the field who were brought together by Liz Claiborne, Inc. to tackle this issue in the public school domain.

The website offers skits with stickers for awareness as well as handbooks for parents, teens, and other constituencies. The lessons are secular in nature and can certainly be tailored to Jewish educational settings. Love Is Not Abuse uses poetry, quizzes, relevant statistics, and video imagery to work on awareness, behavioral change and advocacy in this area. (click here for more information.)

IN TOUCH WITH TEENS CURRICULUM Curriculum Summary In order to help youth develop and maintain healthy, violence-free relationships, Peace Over Violence has been implementing the In Touch With Teens Violence Prevention curriculum in junior high and high schools and other community based youth organizations. The eight-unit curriculum empowers youth to have healthy relationships by providing information about power and control, elements of healthy relationships and healthy sexuality, and media literacy as well as education on sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating violence. The curriculum further addresses the development of pro-social skills such as empathy, impulse control, effective communication, problem solving, and bystander accountability.

The In Touch With Teens curriculum was selected as one of five model youth-violence prevention programs in the United States (and the only such program from California) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was also selected as the relationship-violence curriculum for the ‘Life Skills for the 21st Century’ curriculum of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

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COACHING BOYS INTO MEN PROGRAM PROVES EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

SAN FRANCISCO (April 30, 2013) – Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM), a Futures Without Violence program that seeks to reduce dating violence and sexual assault, is proven effective to reduce abusive behaviors among male athletes towards their female partners, according to a study that will appear today in the online version of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The year-long evaluation study, led by Elizabeth Miller, M.D., Ph.D., chief, Division of Adolescent Medicine at Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC and associate professor of pediatrics at University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, examined the long-term effectiveness of the program. The study looked at more than 2,000 male athletes in 16 California high

schools from October 2009 to October 2011 who participated in the coached program to prevent abuse toward women. Results demonstrated that youth who participated in the program were less likely to support peers' abusive behaviors, and showed a significant relative reduction in abuse perpetration.

“Perpetration of physical, sexual and psychological abuse is unfortunately prevalent in many adolescent relationships,” said Dr. Miller. “At the end of the sports season, boys who participated in the program were significantly more likely to stop abusive behaviors among their peers. Now, one year later, we find that the rates of abuse perpetration actually increased among youth who didn't participate, whereas perpetration did not increase among the male athletes whose coaches delivered the program.”

Created by national nonprofit Futures Without Violence in collaboration with Dr. Miller, the CBIM program works with coaches to teach their male athletes about building healthy relationships and how to intervene when witnessing disrespectful and abusive behaviors among their peers.

“We've always known that coaches play a pivotal role in shaping young athletes' attitudes about respect and healthy relationships,” said Esta Soler, president and founder of Futures Without Violence. “We now have evidence that the program actually stops abuse from happening in the first place.”

The program combines discussions of personal responsibility, being a positive bystander (stopping disrespectful behaviors among peers), respectful relationships, and preventing technology-based bullying, and leverages the influence of athletic coaches as powerful messengers for violence prevention and male athletes as leaders in their community.

The CBIM materials train coaches to talk with their male athletes about stopping and preventing violence and abuse by using a series of training cards that guide athletes through weekly, 15-minute conversations during the sports season. Lessons focus on respect, non-violence, integrity, and leadership.

“The key to this program is respect—teaching players to be aware of how they treat women and how to deal with all people in general,” said Mike Alberghini, head football coach at Grant Union High School in Sacramento, CA, a participating school in the study. “The experience has brought us together as a stronger, more responsible group.”

The study was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Waitt Institute for Violence Prevention funds the Coaching Boys into Men program. The Coaching Boys into Men tools are available for free download from Futures Without Violence at www.coachescorner.org.

Collaborators with Dr. Miller on the study were: Heather L. McCauley, Sc.D, Sc.M.; Maria Catrina D. Virata, M.P.H.; Heather A. Anderson, B.S., all of Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC; Daniel J. Tancredi, Ph.D., UC Davis School of Medicine and Center for Healthcare Policy and Research; Brian O’Connor, M.S., Futures Without Violence; Michele R. Decker, Sc.D., Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; Jay G. Silverman, Ph.D., University of California San Diego School of Medicine; and WEAVE, Inc., Sacramento, CA.

FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

How to Screen for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Screening alone is not enough, a clinical response includes the following steps:



- [Disclosing limits of confidentiality](#)
- [Assessment tools](#)
- [Validated screening tools](#)

A number of screening tools have been evaluated and shown to be effective in identifying victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). In a recent systematic evidence review, the USPSTF noted several screening instruments with high sensitivity and specificity for identifying IPV in the health care setting. The Centers for Disease Control has published a compilation of assessment tools for IPV that compares the psychometric properties of existing tools.

- [Click here to read the CDC's review: Intimate partner violence and sexual violence victimization assessment instruments for use in health care settings.](#)
- [Click here to read the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force \(USPSTF\) recommendations on screening for family and intimate partner violence](#) which includes a review of screening tools.

It is important to note that research also shows that using a safety-card approach to identify IPV has been proven to be an effective way to screen and provide brief counseling on IPV – resulting in improved health outcomes for women and creating opportunities for universal education about healthy relationships. The HRC strongly recommends combining any self-administered questionnaire or use of screening tools described above with a face-to-face discussion about IPV using a safety card as the most effective way to conduct both screening AND brief counseling for IPV.

- [Support and harm reduction](#)
- [Supported referral](#)
- [Documentation](#)

The National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence offers both online and hard copy tools to support IPV screening and counseling education for clinicians, advocates, and others. To view the comprehensive material index, [click here](#). It includes multi-lingual versions of some patient resources, including resources specific to diverse ethnic groups and American Indian/Alaska Native communities.

Select **provider** tools are also identified below:

- **Screening and assessment tools** to facilitate screening
- **A Guide to Addressing Intimate Partner Violence**, Reproductive and Sexual Coercion
- **Hanging Out or Hooking Up: Clinical Guidelines on Responding to Adolescent Relationship Abuse**
- **National Consensus Guidelines** on Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence Victimization in Health Care Settings
- **Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence: Consensus Recommendations for Child and Adolescent Health**
- **Provider button:** “Is someone hurting you? You can talk to me about it.”
- **Posters** to hang in waiting and exam rooms
- **Get the facts** on domestic, sexual and dating violence

Select **patient** tools are also identified below:

- Sample newsletters, **safety cards** and **posters**
- **Discharge instructions**

FOR PARENTS

“Knowing that your son or daughter is in an unhealthy relationship can be both frustrating and frightening. But as a parent, you’re critical in helping your child develop healthy relationships and can provide life-saving support if they’re in an abusive relationship. Remember, dating violence occurs in both same-sex and opposite-sex couples and either gender can be abusive.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You can look for some early warning signs of abuse that can help you identify if your child is in an abusive relationship before it’s too late. Some of these signs include:

- Your child's partner is extremely jealous or possessive.
- You notice unexplained marks or bruises.
- Your child's partner emails or texts excessively.
- You notice that your son or daughter is depressed or anxious.
- Your son or daughter stops participating in extracurricular activities or other interests.
- Your child stops spending time with other friends and family.
- Your child's partner abuses other people or animals.

Your child begins to dress differently.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Tell your child you're concerned for their safety. Point out that what's happening isn't "normal." Everyone deserves a safe and healthy relationship. Offer to connect your son or daughter with a professional, like a counselor or attorney, who they can talk to confidentially.
- Be supportive and understanding. Stress that you're on their side. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let your son or daughter know that it's not their fault and no one "deserves" to be abused. Make it clear that you don't blame them and you respect their choices.
- Believe them and take them seriously. Your child may be reluctant to share their experiences in fear of no one believing what they say. As you validate their feelings and show your support, they can become more comfortable and trust you with more information. Be careful not to minimize your child's situation due to age, inexperience or the length of their relationship.
- Help develop a safety plan. **One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when the victim decides to leave.** Be especially supportive during this time and try to connect your child to support groups or professionals that can help keep them safe.
- Remember that ultimately your child must be the one who decides to leave the relationship. There are many complex reasons why victims stay in unhealthy relationships. Your support can make a critical difference in helping your son or daughter find their own way to end their unhealthy relationship.

BUT MY CHILD ISN'T IN AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP

It's never too early to talk to your child about healthy relationships and dating violence. Starting conversations - even if you don't think your child is dating - is one of the most important steps you can take to help prevent dating violence. Here are some sample questions to start the conversation:

- Are any of your friends dating? What are their relationships like? What would you want in a partner?
- Have you witnessed unhealthy relationships or dating abuse at school? How does it make you feel? Were you scared?
- Do you know what you would do if you witnessed or experienced abuse?
- Has anyone you know posted anything bad about a friend online? What happened afterwards?
- Would it be weird if someone you were dating texted you all day to ask you what you're doing?

Need more tips to get started? Here are some other ways you can prepare to talk to your child about healthy and unhealthy relationships:

- Do your own research on dating abuse to get the facts before talking to your teen or 20-something.
- Provide your child with examples of healthy relationships, pointing out unhealthy behavior. Use examples from your own life, television, movies or music.
- Ask questions and encourage open discussion. Make sure you listen to your son or daughter, giving them a chance to speak. Avoid analyzing, interrupting, lecturing or accusing.
- Keep it low key. Don't push it if your child is not ready to talk. Try again another time.
- Be supportive and nonjudgmental so they know they can come to you for help if their relationship becomes unhealthy in the future.
- Admit to not knowing the answer to a particular question. This response builds trust.
- Reinforce that dating should be fun! Stress that violence is never acceptable.

- Discuss the options your child has if they witness dating abuse or experience it themselves.
- Remind your son or daughter they have the right to say no to anything they're not comfortable with or ready for. They also must respect the rights of others.
- If your child is in a relationship that feels uncomfortable, awkward or frightening, assure them they can come to you. And remember -- any decisions they make about the relationship should be their own.
- Find ways to discuss gender equality at A Call to Men.
- Contact Break the Cycle to find out if there are dating violence prevention programs in your community. If not, work with Break the Cycle to bring abuse prevention to your local school or community group.”

OTHER SIGNS THAT YOUR TEEN MAY BE EXPERIENCING TEEN DATING ABUSE:

From: [Helping Children.org](https://www.helpingchildren.org)

Some of the following may be just part of being a teenager. But, when these changes happen suddenly or without explanation, there is cause for concern.

SCHOOL

- Failing grades
- Dropping out of school or school activities
- Attitude/mood
- Difficulty making decisions
- Changes in personality, becoming anxious or depressed
- Acting out or being secretive
- Avoiding eye contact
- Having “crying jags” or getting “hysterical”
- Constantly thinking about dating partner

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- Bruises, scratches, or other injuries
- Sudden changes in clothes or make-up

ACTIVITIES

- Avoiding friends or changing peer groups
- Giving up activities, interests, or family time that previously had been important
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

PREGNANCY

- Some teenagers believe that having a baby will help make things better.
- Some girls are forced to have sex.

“Teens today are involved in intimate relationships at a much younger age and often have different definitions of what is acceptable behavior in a relationship. Violence is something that is all too common and according to researchers at Iowa State it is a reflection of the relationships teens have with their parents or their parent’s partner.”

Journal Of Youth And Adolescence ([click here](#) for more)

While common sense would create the link between a higher rate of teen dating violence among teens coming from dysfunctional homes or from child abuse, it is studies like the study released by Iowa State that is paving the way for a deeper understanding of why these tragedies occur.

We are also of the belief that children coming from homes where domestic violence has been prevalent should be given extra help and support throughout their teenage years as it appears the more aggravated crimes occur while in their late teens. More programs need to be targeted to this particular demographic than to any other demographic. It is unknown whether Anna had an opportunity to take the Conflict Resolution class that she had missed due to her expulsion. We are uncertain as to whether her boyfriend took the “mandatory” class and wonder why, if he did, he didn’t heed the class’s warning. The (March 2013) Iowa State study helps provide us with some answers.

“If the parent is more aggressive toward the child, the child is more likely to

be in relationships where they're being victimized or perpetrating violence against their partner a few years or even a decade later."

Brenda Lohman

(Lead author and an associate professor of human development and family studies at Iowa State University)

It appears some relationship behaviors are hardwired in at a very young age. Perhaps more attention needs to be focused on parenting programs that promote accountability and healthy conflict resolution between parents so as to lessen the broader reaching effects that are so clearly being felt by neighborhoods of every financial demographic all over this country.

If you are a parent and wonder if your child is at risk of becoming an abusive partner or can be considered a "troubled teen," these are some questions to consider:

"How to spot, and help, your troubled teen" TV's 'Judge Hatchett' tells the warning signs, and what to do about them TODAY

([click here](#) for the entire article)

Q. What defines a troubled teen and when does a parent need to step in to help and/or seek professional intervention?

A. The following list is not exhaustive, but is an important filter as you closely consider the behavior of your child. I would caution parents not to compare your child's behavior to anyone else's, not even another one of your children's. Each child is unique and the signs may be very subtle and inconsistent. If you believe your child is at risk, then respond. Over the years I have seen too many parents in and outside of my courtroom who have said, "I wish I had done something sooner — I simply thought it was a phase and that they would outgrow the problem."

Q. How do you know the difference between a troubled teen and a teen who's just going through adolescence?

A. You have to look at all of the pieces, not just one in isolation. For example, a child who's sleeping a lot may need more rest and also may be an adolescent.

But if they are sleeping, have depression, and are disrespectful or lie, then it may be something more. Moodiness by itself may not be a red flag, but severe mood swings may be something you have to pay attention to.

Q. At what age would you expect to see a behavioral change in your teen?

A. I think we all agree you'll see change during adolescence. That's a difficult passage, moving from being a child to becoming a young adult. It's a period of time that requires a great deal of patience and attention. There's not a magic age. I've have seen cases with kids in 6th grade. It seems like 6th, 7th and 8th grade where I've mostly seen a kid's behavior changing. Each child is different and unique. Children within the same family can exhibit different behavior. We have to look at the child as an individual.

Q. When should you seek professional help?

A. If your child is not responding to whatever methods you're using to intervene, you should seek professional help. Instantly you should seek help if the child is saying "suicide."

Seek outside help if the child is not responding to you or family members who are trying to reach out to help them. If things are not getting better, the worst thing you could do is postpone it. I've had too many people tell me, "I wish I could have done things sooner; I just thought it was a phase." You have to follow your gut and not abandon the issue.

Let's take a look at the signs:

ABANDONED FRIENDS FOR NEW, QUESTIONABLE PEERS

Your child has had the same set of friends since 3rd grade. They played soccer, swam together and danced together. Suddenly she dumps them and starts going out with friends that you know nothing about. They are questionable; they don't want to associate with their old friends. As a parent you have got to know who your kids are with. You have to know who her friends are and what their influences are in your child's life.

They abandoned friends for new questionable peer group that has influenced a change in behavior and attitude. [Note: One of the most tragic cases I presided over involved a 15-year-old girl from an upper-middle-class family. The family moved to a new neighborhood and she began associating with a crowd of kids that frequently got into trouble. She had been an honor student and a great kid. Suddenly her grades fell, she became a truant, she was sneaking out of the house at night, got arrested for joy riding in a stolen car. Eventually she tested positive for HIV. Life-changing. It is so important that the signs not be ignored.

SUDDEN DROP IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

That's a huge red flag. I'm not talking about a case of a math whiz struggling with English. Be concerned with a child who has been consistent in their performance all along and now they have dropped a lot. You have to really drill down and figure out why this is happening. If it's a new school and the expectations are different, then there's a reason, but if they go off a cliff and you don't know, then you have to figure out why. Is it depression? Could it be drug abuse, could it be that they're being bullied and school becomes traumatic? We have to figure out why. When a great kid becomes detached, it raises a red flag.

Another note is if they are cutting class or school and going to house parties during the day or engaging in promiscuous manners. It's a huge red flag that I see often. The question becomes, what are they doing if they are not at school? Are they falling prey to drug dealers? Going to parties, etc.? If they are not in school, why not? And where are they?

So, if the child becomes truant [truancy is the No. 1 predictor that a boy will have a criminal record and the No. 2 predictor for girls, according to the U.S. Department of Justice]; has lost interest in his or her positive activities; has abandoned goals; lacks motivation; is very apathetic.

EXTREME MOOD SWINGS

That's where it gets complicated ... but it's also another huge red flag. With hormonal changes and body chemistry, kids are going through a lot. They are moving through puberty ... I get that. You can expect that ... but if your

kid is going from being deeply depressed to extremely happy, you need to figure out what is going on. If they are disrespectful, alienated, being non-communicative. etc., and their sleeping pattern is very important, too. Either they're not sleeping or they're sleeping all the time — if it goes from one extreme to another, you know you have a problem.

By extreme moodiness I mean the child has unreasonable fits of anger; is very disrespectful; exhibits hostility toward family members; is very withdrawn and barely communicative; wants to be left all alone most of the time; has a radical change in sleeping patterns.

LIES ABOUT WHEREABOUTS

Another big one: You think they're at soccer practice, but she's over at another person's house without supervision. You think he's spending the night with a person he knows well, and instead he's at a friend's house. You have to find out why are they lying; also, what are they doing when they get there that they can't come clean about it?

Other signs are that they frequently miss curfew; or disappear without explanation.

MYSTERIOUS FINANCIAL CHANGES

The child either has lots of unexplained money at one time and doesn't at other times. If a kid is supporting a drug habit, where are they getting the money from? Stealing from family or family members. You can't account for the stuff they are buying. Unexplained valuables, jewelry or other things. They are getting stuff from older peers or they are exchanging their valuables for drugs. So you got an MP3 player for your birthday and now you don't have it anymore, if it's lost, that's one thing. If you continually see things missing and there's no reasonable explanation, plus they're withdrawn, there may be a problem. You have to take pieces and piece them together and know what's going on before you make an assessment.

It is our belief that the writing must have been on the wall with regard to the escalating emotional needs of Anna's boyfriend. While he shoulders the majority of responsibility for the actions he took that bitter night in February

2013, we wouldn't be able to live with ourselves if we didn't at least talk about things ANYONE could have done to sound the alarm as to his escalating desperation. It is our personal opinion that the high-fives and celebration in the courtroom by his parents & attorney during his sentencing, speaks volumes to any parent who feel enabling is OKAY.

For those of you with a conscience, for those of you who feel that more can be done to prevent the tragedies that continue to occur at an alarming rate, please SHARE this important article about the dangers of enabling troubled teens.

Enabling Your Troubled Teen

February 2009 by Kathie Keeler

WHAT IS ENABLING? HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM HELPING?

Helping is doing something for someone else that they can't do for themselves. Enabling is doing something for someone else that they can and should do for themselves. Enabling allows your teen to comfortably continue with his unacceptable behavior. Enabling can be intentional or unintentional. At any rate, the teen remains the same because there are no consequences for bad behavior. The enabler facilitates the continuation of unacceptable behavior.

QUIZ FOR PARENTS OF TEENS:

1. Have you ever "called in sick" for your teen when they didn't feel like going to school?
2. Have you accepted part of the blame or excused his/her drinking/ drugging or bad behavior?
3. Have you avoided talking about the bad behavior or drinking/drugging out of fear of hearing the response?
4. Have you tried drinking/drugging with him in hopes of strengthening the relationship?
5. Have you given him "one more chance" and then another and another?
6. Have you bailed him out of jail or paid for his legal fees?
7. Have you paid bills that he was supposed to have paid himself?
8. Have you finished a job or project that the teen failed to complete himself?

9. Without first checking out the evidence, have you marched down to the school (jail, job) to give them “a piece of your mind” when they accused your teen of using drugs?
10. Have you ever told your teen, “Just don’t get caught” when you’ve talked about illegal behavior such as underage drinking or using illegal drugs?

Are you happier or more gratified when you are doing for others than when you do for yourself? Do you feel guilty spending time, money, or resources on your own projects instead of devoting time to others’ needs? Do you take on the problems and cares of others with vigor and become stressed if you cannot solve their problems? Are you annoyed and angry if people don’t give you the thanks and accolades you secretly feel you deserve for all the good things you have done for them?

Of course, if you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you at some point in time have enabled your teen to avoid responsibility. Rather than “help” your teen, you have actually made it easier for him to get worse! You have not only enabled your teen, you have probably become a major contributor to the growing and continuing problem and, chances are, have become affected by the problem yourself.

As long as your teen has his enabling system in place, it is easy for him to continue to deny that he has a drinking/drugging problem -- since most of his problems are being “solved” by those around him. Only when he is forced to face the consequences of his own actions, will it finally begin to sink in how deep his problem has become. Some of these choices are not easy for friends and families. If your teen gets in trouble with the law, that affects you. The rest of the family will likely suffer right along with him.

Calling the police and reporting your teen’s illegal behavior helps him or her to come face-to-face with the problem. Those kinds of choices are difficult. These choices require “tough love.” But it is love. Unless your teen is allowed to face the consequences of his own actions, he will never realize just how much his drinking/drugging has become a problem -- to himself and those around him.

WHO ARE THE ENABLERS?

They can be teachers, doctors, judges, therapists, parents, attorneys, teens....you name it. They are everywhere. They're rich, poor, middle class and everything else. They can be highly educated, uneducated, street-wise, or naïve.

WHY DO THEY DO IT?

This is most easily understood from the perspective of the symbiotic relationship. The pilot fish tags along with the shark and eats the parasites on the shark. They both get something from the relationship. The shark gets clean; the pilot fish gets food. Like the shark and the pilot fish, the enabler and the addict (or alcoholic or mentally ill or incapacitated person) fit together like a hand in a glove. They both need each other. They both get something out of the relationship.

Enablers thrive on the weaknesses and needs of others. They are needed! They take too much responsibility for the actions of others, always feeling they can somehow manipulate the person or situation and somehow bring about a positive change.

BEWARE OF "NICE" PEOPLE

Enablers may appear to, and even fool themselves into thinking that they are loving and kind and giving. However, they seek out or "enjoy" relationships with "victims" as these kinds of relationships help them to feel good about themselves. Their acts of kindness are a means of control and manipulation. They exert enormous amounts of energy trying to "help" the victim; if the victim gets better, it does not really meet their aim. They need to feel "needed" and useful thus enabling the victim to remain in their unhealthy situation. Most codependent people gain their sense of self worth from their relationship to the needy person or abusive relative. They feel magnanimous by lavishing all of their time and attention on the other person, never looking at or filling the hole in their personality.

Enablers are most likely to "shoot the messenger" because the messenger tells the truth. Like the addict, the enablers don't want to hear the truth. So, they

lie to themselves. Because they have an agenda-that you meet their needs to be needed-they aren't interested in healthy solutions. Their motto may as well be, "Let me help you hurt yourself." They are the ones who are most likely to hurt the ones that they say that they love.

ENABLERS HAVE HUGE UNMET NEEDS

Here are some of the typical needs of enablers: the need to be needed, the need to control things, the need to be "loved" or appreciated, the need to rescue, and the need to "look good." They also suffer from mixed-up priorities, poor boundaries, denial and delusions.

UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS

Enablers are typically overly responsible. Their motto is "give until it hurts." And they often hurt. They appear to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of the addict. They put all of their focus on the addict. And, although it can be quite subtle, they often manipulate and control others through their "niceness."

WHO SUFFERS BECAUSE OF THE ENABLER?

Everyone-the addict, the other family members, society and, of course, the enabler herself. Because there are no consequences for bad behavior, the bad behavior continues. So everyone suffers. Until the enabler stops enabling, everyone continues to suffer.

BREAKING UP WITH AN ABUSIVE PARTNER

from: [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

“If you’re in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, figuring out the next step can be very difficult. You have feelings for this person and have developed a history with them. However, it’s the future, not the past, that you should consider. Will you be happy with them? Will you be able to achieve your goals? Will you feel safe? Whatever decision you make, we can help you plan for your safety.

STAYING TOGETHER

You may not be ready or it may not be possible to leave your abusive relationship, but you can still increase your safety. Try following these tips:

- If you go to a party or event with your partner, plan a way home with someone you trust.
- Avoid being alone with your partner. Make sure that other people are around when you’re together.
- If you’re alone with your partner, make sure that someone knows where you are and when you’ll return.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A BREAK UP

You may feel pressure from your friends and family to just break up and move on, but we know it’s never that simple. Here are some things to keep in mind when thinking about breaking up:

- The person you’re dating has probably become a huge part of your life. You might see more of them now than you do your friends or family. So being scared about feeling lonely after the break up is normal. Talking to friends or finding new activities may make filling your new free time easier.

- You'll probably miss your partner after you break up, maybe a lot. Even if they've been abusive and controlling, it's normal to miss them. Try writing down the reasons you want to end your relationship and keep them as a reminder for later on.
- If your partner is controlling and jealous, they may make a lot of decisions for you. It can take time to adjust to making your own decisions again. If you start to feel helpless or overwhelmed, tap into your **support system**.
- You may be scared to end your relationship. If you are, take that fear seriously. Use our safety plan workbooks below to think through the dangerous situations you may encounter.

BREAKING UP

Ending an unhealthy or abusive relationship is not like ending a healthy one. Your abusive partner may not accept the break up or respect your boundaries. They may try to control you through guilt trips, threats or insults. It may be very difficult to have a peaceful or mutual breakup with an abusive partner. Just know that as long as YOU are ok with the decision, it's ok if your partner is not. If you're thinking of ending your relationship, consider these tips:

- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. It may seem cruel to break up over the phone or by email but it may be the safest way.
- If you break up in person, do it in a public place. Have friends or your parents wait nearby. Try to take a cell phone with you.
- Don't try to explain your reasons for ending the relationship more than once. There is nothing you can say that will make your ex happy.
- Let your friends and parents know you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your ex will come to your house or confront you when you're alone.
- If your ex does come to your house when you're alone, don't go to the door.
- Trust yourself. If you feel afraid, you probably have a good reason.
- Ask for help. Chat with a peer advocate who is trained and ready to answer your questions.

AFTER BREAKING UP

Just because an unhealthy or abusive relationship is over, doesn't mean the risk of violence is too. Use these tips to stay safe after ending your relationship:

- Talk with your friends and family so they can support you.
- If you can, tell your parents what's going on, especially if your ex may come by your home.
- Talk to a school counselor or teacher you trust. Together, you can alert security, adjust your class schedule or find other ways to help you feel safer.
- Avoid isolated areas at school and local hangouts. Don't walk alone or wear earphones.
- Keep friends or family close when attending parties or events you think your ex might attend.
- Save any threatening or harassing messages your ex sends. Set your profile to private on social networking sites and ask friends to do the same.
- If you ever feel you're in immediate danger, call 911.
- Memorize important numbers in case you don't have access to your cellphone.”

CAN BYSTANDERS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

We were impressed with CNN's article, "Teens trained to spot drama before it turns dangerous," published on in June 2013. With so many articles focused on the victim, it was refreshing to see an article that was willing to tackle the tough subject of bystander accountability.

In interviews with friends of Anna Lynn Hurd, several bystanders did report having physically intervened during her boyfriend's public meltdowns. Unfortunately the physical interventions wouldn't be enough to dissuade him from the actions he took that fateful night. It could be argued that friends of the self-confessed murderer had already fostered a climate of abuse that was not only tolerated but encouraged. Interviews with friends of Anna's boyfriend would reveal a crime of passion that had been coerced by the victim herself. It is this climate of apathy toward the victim that should be extremely concerning.

"But research shows that an influential factor in dating violence **is associating with peers who project negative attitudes toward their partners** through actions or words."

Emily Rothman

(Associate professor with Boston University's School of Public Health)

The CNN article goes on to introduce the MVP (Mentors in Violence Prevention) approach as a new means for infiltrating long-lasting social hierarchies that unwittingly foster the, "a man's home is his castle" ideologies. The importance of starting a dialogue with young men in real-world scenarios can be a crucial step in changing the way young men handle conflict with their girlfriends. Without having that context, young men are apt to deal with control issues in the heat of the moment without a game plan. Why not equip partners with other tools for handling conflict as opposed to just hoping crimes of passion won't occur? The MVP program also seems to remove the judgment from teen dating violence so that every participant in the program can see just how easy it is for ANYONE to become a perpetrator.

“MVP sessions can only begin to explore some of the deeply rooted cultural characteristics that make these sorts of tragedies possible. But one of the crucial aspects of MVP discussions – which are typically interactive and animated – is that focusing on specific cases of abuse can often lead to open, wide-ranging discussions about masculinity, gender relations, abuses of power and conformist behavior.”

Mentors In Violence Prevention ([click here](#) for more)

QUIZ - DO ABUSERS CHANGE?

from: love is respect.org

Is your relationship really becoming abuse-free? Answer yes or no to the following questions to find out. Make sure to write down your responses. At the end, you'll find out how to score your answers.

IS MY PARTNER:

1. More receptive of my opinions and activities than they were in the past?
2. Open to talking about how their behaviors make me feel?
3. Openly seeking professional help because they really do want to change?
4. Accepting responsibility for their actions and acknowledging their behavior was unhealthy and unacceptable?

DOES MY PARTNER:

5. Get upset when I express a different opinion?
6. Have a possessive attitude towards me and my actions?
7. Act like the victim for having to change? Believe that I owe him or her something for changing?
8. Blame me for our problems?
9. Make excuses for abusive behavior, past and present?\
10. Dismiss how much I was hurt by the abuse?
11. Not take my feelings seriously, especially those about the abuse? Use small signs of disrespect, like eye-rolling?
12. Hurt me physically, even if the violence doesn't seem like a big deal, like pulling hair?
13. Substitute violence with abusive language or emotional abuse?\
14. Substitute physical violence with intimidation, like punching the wall beside me instead of punching me?

15. Use pressure and guilt when it comes to our sex life?
16. Use methods of intimidation, control or humiliation?
17. Fall back on abusive behavior when we have arguments?

SCORING

Give yourself 1 point for answering “yes” you answered to numbers 1-4; and 5 points for every “yes” response to numbers 5-21.

Now that you’re inished and have your score, the next step is to find out what your score means. Simply take your total score and see which of the boxes below applies to you.

SCORE: 1-4 POINTS

If you scored 1-4 points, you may be noticing some positive changes in your partner. Progress is a great thing. However, it is still a good idea to keep an eye out for any signs that abusive behaviors are returning, even small ones. If something doesn’t feel right, don’t ignore your intuition, it can be telling you something.

And remember, even if your partner has made changes in their behavior, you are never obligated to stay in the relationship. Remind yourself that you deserve to be safe and healthy, no matter what you choose.

SCORE: 5 POINTS OR MORE

If you scored 5 or more points, your partner still has a lot of work to do. Even though your partner has agreed to change, they are still hurting you. You may want to seriously consider leaving the relationship and ending contact with them.

QUIZ - AM I A GOOD BOYFRIEND/ GIRLFRIEND? QUIZ

from: [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

Are you a good boyfriend or girlfriend? Answer yes or no to the following questions to find out. Make sure to write down your responses. At the end, you'll find out how to score your answers.

DO I

1. Forget to thank my partner when they do something nice for me?
2. Ignore my partner's calls if I don't feel like talking?
3. Get jealous when my partner makes a new friend?
4. Have trouble making time to listen to my partner when something is bothering him?
5. Discourage my partner from trying something new like joining a club?
6. Call, text or drive by my partner's house a lot?
7. Get upset when my partner wants to hang out with their friends or family?
8. Make fun of my partner or call them names?
9. Criticize my partner for their taste in music or clothing?
10. Make fun of my partner's appearance?
11. Accuse my partner of flirting or cheating even if I'm not sure that's what happened?
12. Take out my frustrations on my partner, like snapping at them or giving them attitude?
13. Throw things if I'm mad at my partner or do things like hit walls or drive dangerously?
14. Read my partner's texts or go through their personal things, like their wallet or purse?
15. Tell my partner they are the reason for my bad mood even if they aren't?
16. Try to make my partner feel guilty about things they have no control

over?

17. Sometimes say things to my partner knowing that they are hurtful?
18. Make my partner feel bad about something nice they did for me that I didn't like, even though I know they tried their best?
19. Talk down to or embarrass my partner in front of others?
20. Have sex with my partner even if I think they don't want to go that far?

SCORING – SO ARE YOU A GOOD BOYFRIEND/ GIRLFRIEND?

Give yourself one point for every “Yes” you answered to questions one through four and five points for all “Yes” answers to numbers 5-20. Don't give yourself any points for any “No” answers.

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.

Score: 0 Points

If you got zero points, congratulations! You make a good boyfriend/girlfriend! It sounds like you're very mindful of your actions and respectful of your partner's feelings -- these are the building blocks of a healthy relationship. Keeping things on a good track takes work, so stay with it! As long as you and your partner continue like this, your relationship should grow in a healthy direction.

Score: 1-2 Points

If you scored one or two points, there may be a couple of things in your relationship that could use a little attention. Nobody is perfect, but it is important to be mindful of your actions and try to avoid hurting your partner. Remember, communication is key to building a **healthy relationship!**

Score: 3-4 Points

If you scored three or four points, it's possible that some of your actions may hurt your partner and relationship. While the behaviors may not be abusive, they can worsen over time if you don't change. Read about the different **types of abuse**, so that you can keep your relationship safe and healthy.

Score: 5 Points or More

If you scored five or more points, some of **your actions may be abusive**. You may not realize it, but these behaviors are damaging. The first step to improving your relationship is becoming aware of your unhealthy actions and admitting they are wrong. It's important to take responsibility for the problem and get help to end it. An unhealthy pattern is hard to change, so **chat with a peer advocate** for more information on how to get help.

QUIZ - HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

from: [love is respect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

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 write down your responses. At the end, you'll find out how to score your answers.

THE PERSON I'M WITH

1. Is very supportive of things that I do.
2. Encourages me to try new things.
3. Likes to listen when I have something on my mind.
4. Understands that I have my own life too.
5. Is not liked very well by my friends.
6. Says I'm too involved in different activities.
7. Texts me or calls me all the time.
8. Thinks I spend too much time trying to look nice.
9. Gets extremely jealous or possessive.
10. Accuses me of flirting or cheating.
11. Constantly checks up on me or makes me check in.
12. Controls what I wear or how I look.
13. Tries to control what I do and who I see.
14. Tries to keep me from seeing or talking to my family and friends.
15. Has big mood swings, getting angry and yelling at me one minute but being sweet and apologetic the next.
16. Makes me feel nervous or like I'm "walking on eggshells."
17. Puts me down, calls me names or criticizes me.
18. Makes me feel like I can't do anything right or blames me for problems.
19. Makes me feel like no one else would want me.
20. Threatens to hurt me, my friends or family.
21. Threatens to hurt him or herself because of me.
22. Threatens to destroy my things.

23. Grabs, pushes, shoves, chokes, punches, slaps, holds me down, throws things or hurts me in some way.
24. Breaks or throws things to intimidate me.
25. Yells, screams or humiliates me in front of other people.
26. Pressures or forces me into having sex or going farther than I want to.

SCORING

Give yourself one point for every no you answered to numbers one through four, one point for every yes response to numbers five through eight and five points for every yes to numbers nine 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.

Score: 0 Points

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.

Score: 1-2 Points

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.

Score: 3-4 Points

If you scored three or four points, it sounds like you may be seeing some warning signs of an abusive relationship. Don't ignore these red flags. Something that starts small can grow much worse over time. No relationship is perfect -- it takes work! But in a healthy relationship you won't find abusive behaviors.

Score: 5 or More Points

If you scored five or more 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 right now.

QUIZ - HOW WOULD YOU HELP?

from: *love is respect.org*

Have you ever wanted to help a friend in an abusive relationship but didn't know how?

Have you ever tried to help someone and they didn't end their relationship? Were you disappointed? Did you wonder why you even bothered?

Helping a person in an abusive relationship is frustrating sometimes. Be patient. Maybe they will come around and maybe they won't. But by trying to help you show your friend that you support them and can be trusted. Remember it is difficult and scary to leave an unhealthy relationship. Take this quiz to find out how ready and willing you are to help.

1. Your friend Elisha and John, a guy she met at work, have been going out for a while. One day, John showed up at Elisha's school and saw her give a male friend a hug. John grabbed her arm and pulled her to his car where he called her a slut and a cheater.

If I saw this happen...

- a. I would tell Elisha that I was concerned about her and help her in information about abusive relationships. (2)
- b. I would tell another friend and hope that they would do something to help Elisha. (1)
- c. I would leave it alone. If Elisha didn't say anything to me, it's not my place to get involved. (0)

2. Elizabeth is dating her classmate Marc. Things seem great, but in private Marc isn't very nice. He grabs her arms hard and leaves bruises. When he found out she was pregnant, he shoved her repeatedly and yelled at her for messing up his life.

If Elizabeth came to me for help...

a. I would tell her that I was the wrong person to speak with and that she should talk to a counselor. (1)

b. I wouldn't want to get involved because it's not my problem. (0)

c. I would let her know that I was there for her and go with her to get **help**. (2)

3. Christina and your friend Eric have been dating for a year. Christina is really jealous and always accuses Eric of cheating on her even though he hasn't. She texts him constantly and checks all his emails. When they fight, she calls him names and tells him no one else will ever love him.

If I heard Christina yelling at or putting Eric down...

a. I wouldn't say anything. Eric should be able to defend himself. (0)

b. I would tell Eric that he didn't deserve to be treated that way and that he should consider ending the relationship. (2)

c. I wouldn't say anything to either of them, but I would let other friends know that I thought it was wrong. (1)

4. Rebecca and Janet met at the mall. When they first began dating, Rebecca was very sweet. Over time, she started putting Janet down and once ended a fight by slapping her. Things got worse and Rebecca told Janet if she ever left her, she would kill herself.

If I knew about all of this and another friend asked me if I thought Janet was ok...

a. I would tell them to stay out of it—they are both girls. If Janet doesn't ask for help, it's nobody's business. (0)

b. I would pretend I didn't know and tell them to ask Janet directly. (1)

c. I would tell them I was also concerned about Janet and that we should go together to offer our help. (2)

5. Ana and Jeremy have been dating for two years and have a baby together. Jeremy has been physically abusive toward Ana and even screams at their child. Ana loves Jeremy and does not want to break up **their family**.

If I told Ana I was concerned about her and the baby and offered to help, but

she turned me away and said I was wrong about Jeremy...

- a. I wouldn't take it personally and would later give her information that explained about abusive relationships and how to get help. (2)
- b. I would be really upset that she didn't listen to me and tell her she was on her own. (0)
- c. I would leave it alone and tell her to call me if she ever wanted to talk.(1)

SCORING

Look at the point values next to your circled answers and add the numbers up to get your total.

Simply take your total score and see which of the categories below apply to you!

Score: 8-10 Points

When it comes to your friends, you're willing to put yourself out there and give them the support they need. That's great! Being in an abusive relationship is never easy, so letting your friend know that they can count on you for help is the best thing you can do. Learn what else you can do to help a friend who is experiencing abuse.

Score: 5-7 Points

You care about your friend and your heart is in the right place, but you're having some difficulty reaching out. Some people in abusive relationships may not realize they're in danger or may be afraid to ask for help. You shouldn't be afraid to reach out and let them know you're worried about their safety. At least you'll know you tried your best and they'll know you are someone they can trust. Learn what else you can do to help who is experiencing abuse.

Score: 0-4 Points

Dealing with someone who is in an abusive relationship can be difficult. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't at least try. Remember that being in an abusive relationship is scary and lonely, and some people don't know how to ask for help. Be there for your friends. You may be the only person they can count on. Learn how to help a friend who is experiencing abuse.

STOP ABUSE FOR EVERY TEEN (SAFE) ACT

Stop Abuse for Every Teen (SAFE) Act

Teen dating violence is pervasive and results in poor physical and mental health, lower academic achievement, truancy and school drop-out. An effective prevention program will decrease these poor academic factors and increase student health, safety and academic achievement by meeting youth where they are — in schools. A few facts:

Dating Violence is the Rule – Not the Exception

- About 72% of 8th and 9th graders report “dating”
- 1 in 4 adolescents reports emotional, physical, or sexual violence each year
- 1 in 10 adolescents reports being a victim of physical dating violence
- 1 in 4 teens in a relationship say they have been called names, harassed or put down by their partner through cell phones and texting
- A substantial number of teen dating violence incidents occur in school buildings and on school grounds **Students Can’t Learn if they Don’t Feel Safe**
- The pervasiveness of abusive behaviors occurring on school campuses affects the overall school climate and distracts students from their focus **on learning**
- Students who experienced physical and/or sexual violence had lower grades; approximately 20% of these students had mostly D’s/F’s and only 5-6% had mostly A’s
- Witnessing violence has been associated with decreased school

attendance and academic performance Dating Violence Results in Long-term Negative Health Consequences

- Teen victims of physical dating violence are more likely than their non-abused peers to smoke, use drugs, engage in unhealthy diet behaviors (taking diet pills or laxatives and vomiting to lose weight), engage in risky sexual behaviors, and attempt or consider suicide
- Girls are up to 6 times more likely to become pregnant and more than 2 times as likely to report a sexually transmitted disease
- Physically abused teens are 3 times more likely than non-abused peers to experience violence during college

- Abusive behaviors learned in adolescence can escalate into adulthood

For over 15 years, domestic violence and sexual assault agencies have provided a range of teen dating violence prevention education programs in schools using federal and state domestic violence and sexual assault funds and private grants. Programs have been delivered during a range of classes, after-school programs, athletic and other extra-curricular activities and through school climate improvement activities. However, we are learning that teen dating violence and bullying, and other problem behaviors including substance abuse and weapon carrying, are occurring together in teens. As a result, we need to enable schools to use federal school violence prevention funding to deliver teen dating violence prevention education programs as part of a comprehensive approach to school safety. More and more states have passed or are considering teen dating violence bills. To date, at least 15 states have passed laws (Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Washington) and many more, such as California and Maryland, are considering legislation.

Most of the state bills are an unfunded mandate on schools to teach about teen dating violence, train school personnel, and to incorporate response mechanisms into their school policies. Stop Abuse for Every Teen Act or SAFE Teen Act As Congress considers reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, advocates and concerned parents are proposing a marker bill entitled “Stop Abuse for Every

Teen Act” or the “SAFE Teen Act.” This bill would:

- Expressly authorize schools to use existing grant funding for teen dating violence prevention
- Highlight teen dating violence prevention as part of the comprehensive, community prevention program, Safe Schools, Healthy Students, that already funds prevention activities
- Support better teen dating violence data to understand the scope of the problem as well as having a means of measuring the impact of prevention programs and policies
- Support promising practices to further replicate, refine and test prevention models
- This is not a mandated program and the cost is included in existing grant streams

To cosponsor the SAFE Teen Act, please contact Steffany Stern in Rep. Gwen Moore’s office at Steffany.stern@mail.house.gov or call 202-225-4572.

For questions, please contact Sally Schaeffer with Futures Without Violence, formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund, at sschaeffer@futureswithoutviolence.org.

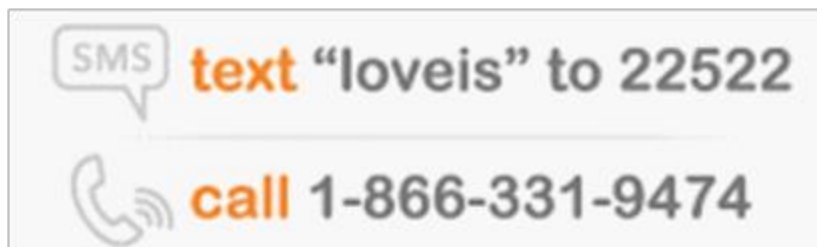
You can also reach out to Miri Cypers with Jewish Women International at mcypers@jwi.org or 202-464-4804.

HELP!

from: *love is respect.org*

Peer advocates are available to support you 24/7

[What is live chat?](#) | [Our privacy policy](#)



NATIONAL HOTLINES

If at any time you feel that you or someone you know are in immediate danger, call 911. If you need support, there are people and resources available to help. For information and assistance anytime, contact:

National Dating Abuse Helpline

866-331-9474

866-331-8453 TTY

The National Dating Abuse Helpline offers one-on-one service from trained peer advocates and is specifically designed for teens and young adults. The advocates are available 24/7 to answer texts, phone calls and chats. The helpline also offers translation services.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-SAFE (7233)

800-787-3224 TTY

National Domestic Violence Hotline provides crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals to agencies in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and offers services in more than 170 languages.

National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-HOPE (4673)

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) offers assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Callers are automatically directed to on duty volunteers to answer questions, provide support and refer to local resources. RAINN also operates the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline, providing live and secure help to victims.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800-656-TALK (8255)

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline offers assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The hotline is staffed by trained counselors and callers are routed to the crisis clinic nearest their location.

LOVE IS RESPECT.ORG

ABOUT

Break the Cycle and the **National Dating Abuse Helpline** are collaborating to bring you loveisrespect.org. By combining resources and capacity, they are reaching more people, building more healthy relationships and saving more lives.

They designed *loveisrespect.org* to:

- Create the ultimate resource fostering healthy dating attitudes and relationships.
- Provide a safe space for young people to access information and help in an environment that is designed specifically for them.
- Ensure confidentiality and trust so young people feel safe and supported—online and off.

They call loveisrespect.org the ultimate resource to engage, educate and empower youth and young adults to prevent and end abusive relationships.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR TEAM

BREAK THE CYCLE

Break the Cycle is the leading voice dedicated to the prevention of dating abuse. Learn more about their services and resources available nationwide.

NATIONAL DATING ABUSE HELPLINE

The National Dating Abuse Helpline is a program of the National Council on Family Violence. Learn more about their work and the advocates who assist young people 24/7.

NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Find out more about the national advisers working to make sure loveisrespect.org is the most comprehensive resource for young people on the issue of dating abuse.

ABOUT THEIR NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

The National Youth Advisory Board (NYAB) consists of 25 hardworking and dedicated individuals, ranging in age from 13 to 24. Middle school, high school and college students, as well as young people not in school, work together to represent youth of all ages, backgrounds and communities. The NYAB is possible thanks to the generous contribution of mark, A Division of Avon Products.

NYAB is busy showing teens and young adults that they DO have a voice and CAN take action. This board provides insights and feedback on every aspect of loveisrespect.org -- from its design to how it's marketed. Working both online and off, NYAB members write blogs for the site, host awareness-raising events across the country, meets monthly and generally take steps forward toward youth empowerment, awareness and success!

February is teenDVmonth

In February, the NYAB hosts Respect Week, a chance for young people to stand together nationwide and promote healthy relationships. Learn more!

MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD ARE:

1. Dedicated in raising awareness and preventing abuse
2. Involved in their community
3. Social media savvy -- willing to promote events and contribute to blogs
4. Comfortable with public speaking
5. Energetic
6. Accountable in completing tasks and meeting deadlines
7. Able to communicate online, offline and with peers
8. Passionate
9. Committed to the issue on a personal or social level
10. Respectful

TEEN DATING BILL OF RIGHTS AND PLEDGE

I HAVE THE RIGHT:

1. To always be treated with respect.
2. In a respectful relationship, you should be treated as an equal.
3. To be in a healthy relationship.
4. A healthy relationship is not controlling, manipulative, or jealous.
5. A healthy relationship involves honesty, trust, and communication.
6. To not be hurt physically or emotionally.
7. You should feel safe in your relationship at all times. Abuse is never deserved and is never your fault.
Conflicts should be resolved in a peaceful and rational way.
8. To refuse sex or affection at anytime.
9. A healthy relationship involves making consensual sexual decisions.
You have the right to not have sex.
Even if you have had sex before, you have the right to refuse sex for **any reason**.
10. To have friends and activities apart from my boyfriend or girlfriend.
11. Spending time by yourself, with male or female friends, or with family is normal and healthy.
12. To end a relationship.
13. You should not be harassed, threatened, or made to feel guilty for ending an unhealthy or healthy relationship. You have the right to end a relationship for any reason **you choose**.

I PLEDGE TO:

- Always treat my boyfriend or girlfriend with respect.
- Never hurt my boyfriend or girlfriend physically, verbally, or **emotionally**.
- Respect my girlfriend's or boyfriend's decisions concerning sex and

affection.

- Not be controlling or manipulative in my relationship.
- Accept responsibility for myself and my actions.

Break The Cycle

Adapted from loveisrespect.org

THE DWELLING PLACE

Phone (651) 221-0405

Email info@thedwellingplaceshelter.org

Website <http://www.thedwellingplaceshelter.org>

MISSION

The Mission of The Dwelling Place is to protect families and heal lives affected by domestic abuse by providing safe housing, Christ-centered programs, training in life-skills, and community education.

COMPANY OVERVIEW

The Dwelling Place is a 501c3 St. Paul, MN faith-based domestic violence program. offering transitional housing, advocacy, education and services to women and children fleeing an abusive domestic partner with a mission to provide safety, healing, wholeness and freedom to individuals and families affected by the tragedy of domestic violence.

DESCRIPTION

Goals- The primary goal of The Dwelling Place is to end the generational cycle of domestic violence by helping women become self-sufficient, empowered, and committed to living a Christ-centered life.

Additional Goals Include Providing:

- Safe Transitional Housing (for 12-18 months) for up to 7 women and 10 children at a time
- Intensive case management, advocacy, and direct services to program

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Dwelling Place (TDP)-Founded in 1998, by a survivor of domestic abuse, TDP was created to be a safe place for women and children fleeing an abusive domestic partner that would offer spiritual guidance and programs from a Christian perspective and a peaceful space in which to heal. This desire remains at the core of the mission, which now includes safe transitional housing, case management, spiritual discipleship, job preparedness training, and access to many other supportive services.

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