



NEW ENGLAND LEARNING CENTER FOR WOMEN IN TRANSITION

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~ TEEN DATING VIOLENCE and SEXUAL ASSAULT ~

Some ways teens experience intimate violence:

- Teens may be abused in the context of a dating relationship.
- Teens may be abused when living with an abusive partner.
- Teen parents may have to deal with an abusive co-parent.
- Teens may be abused when escaping abuse or incest at home.
- Teens who are escaping exploitation in the sex industry may be abused.
- Teens who are running away from home or who have been kicked out of their homes may end up in abusive relationships.

Impact of sexual assault on teens can include:

Isolation... drug or alcohol abuse... fear and anxiety... inability to make good choices... pregnancy... guilt and shame... loss of self esteem... irrational choices... physical injuries... death

TIPS FOR SAFETY AND CONFIDENCE

Remember: the abuse is not your fault. Don't be ashamed to tell someone about the abuse. It's not your fault - it's the abuser's problem.

Tell someone what's going on. Talk to a trusted adult or peer about what's happening. Sometimes just talking about what's happening can help you to feel better. And sometimes an adult or friend might have useful advice or be able to help.

Stand up for yourself. If the abuse is just starting, tell the abuser that his or her behavior is not acceptable and that you won't put up with it. **But be careful.** If the abuse is ongoing and the abuser is accustomed to getting his or her own way, you may risk more violence if you stand up for yourself. If you think this might happen, don't try it when you're alone with an abuser, and be prepared to leave to escape the abuse.

Take care of yourself:

- **Try to eat and sleep well.** You'll feel better, and your physical health affects your ability to cope with stress.
- **Relax and play.** When you are relaxed, you have a better ability to make decisions and to communicate. Physical exercise can increase your sense of well-being.

- **Be careful with alcohol and drugs.** Many people use alcohol and drugs to deal with tension and pain. Unfortunately, they will only drain your energy and affect your ability to think clearly. Try to drink and use only in moderation or, better yet, avoid substances altogether.
- **Hurting yourself is not the answer.** If you believe the abuser's put-downs or turn your anger on yourself, you may start to feel like suicide is your only option. But it's normal to feel down when you're being hurt, and there are options and steps you can make to make things better for yourself. Some are listed here. **You can call NELCWIT's hotline (413-772-0871 or 888-249-0806) or another hotline** if you need to talk to someone right away.

Save money and get some job skills. Having an emergency fund will relieve your anxiety. If you have job skills, you won't have to depend on others financially.

Know your local resources. If you are in the Franklin County/North Quabbin area, call NELCWIT's hotline (413-772-0871 or 888-249-0806) to learn more. You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224) to learn about resources in your area.

And remember: You are a strong person, and you can grow stronger when you know you can make it on your own. When you are ready to leave an abusive situation, help is available.

A few statistics

According to **Jane Doe, Inc:**

- 18% of high school females and 7% of high school males report being physically hurt by someone they were dating
- 16% of girls and 6% of boys in Massachusetts high schools reported that they have had sexual contact against their will.
- 35.5% of 8th and 9th graders report that they have experienced at least one act of non-sexual dating violence.
- 10.7% of 8th and 9th graders report that they have experienced at least one incident of sexual violence within a dating relationship.
- Adolescents who have experienced sexual contact against their will exhibit substantially higher rates of many risky behaviors than do other adolescents: 46% had engaged in binge drinking in the past month (versus 31%); 26% have used cocaine (versus 8%); and 27% have made a suicide attempt in the past year (versus 6%).

If you have experienced dating violence or sexual assault, you are not alone. Help is available. Call NELCWIT's hotline, 413-772-0871 or 888-249-0806 any time.