

Help Your Child

Knowing that your son or daughter is in an unhealthy relationship can be both frustrating and frightening. As a parent, you are critical in helping your child develop healthy relationships and can provide life-saving support if they are in an abusive relationship.

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.
- 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.
- Be supportive, understanding, and non-judgmental. Let your child 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.
- 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 child find their own way to end their unhealthy relationship.
- If your child decides they want to end their relationship, help develop a safety plan. One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when the victim decides to leave. Try connecting your child to support groups or professionals that can help them stay safe.
- Offer to connect your child with a professional, like a counselor or attorney, who they can talk to confidentially.
- Start the conversation! It's never too early to talk to your child about healthy relationships and dating violence, even if you don't think your child is dating. You can empower your child to build healthy relationships and prevent dating violence.

What Do I Need to Know?

Dating abuse is a pattern of behaviors in which one dating partner seeks to maintain power and control over the other. Learn the warning signs to see if your child may be in an abusive relationship.

Does your child...

- apologize and make excuses for their partner's behavior?
- seem depressed or anxious?
- cancel or change plans often?
- call and/or text to an extreme?
- act fearful of upsetting or angering their partner?
- have dramatic changes in weight, appearance, or grades?
- have unexplained injuries?
- give up hobbies or time with friends and family?
- seem to have lost confidence in themselves?
- have difficulty making decisions?

If you or someone you know is experience domestic or dating abuse, please contact JCADA for support on our free and confidential helpline: **1-877-88-JCADA (52232)**

Note: Some information adapted with permission from loveisrespect.org.

