

Dating Violence

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Age: 17

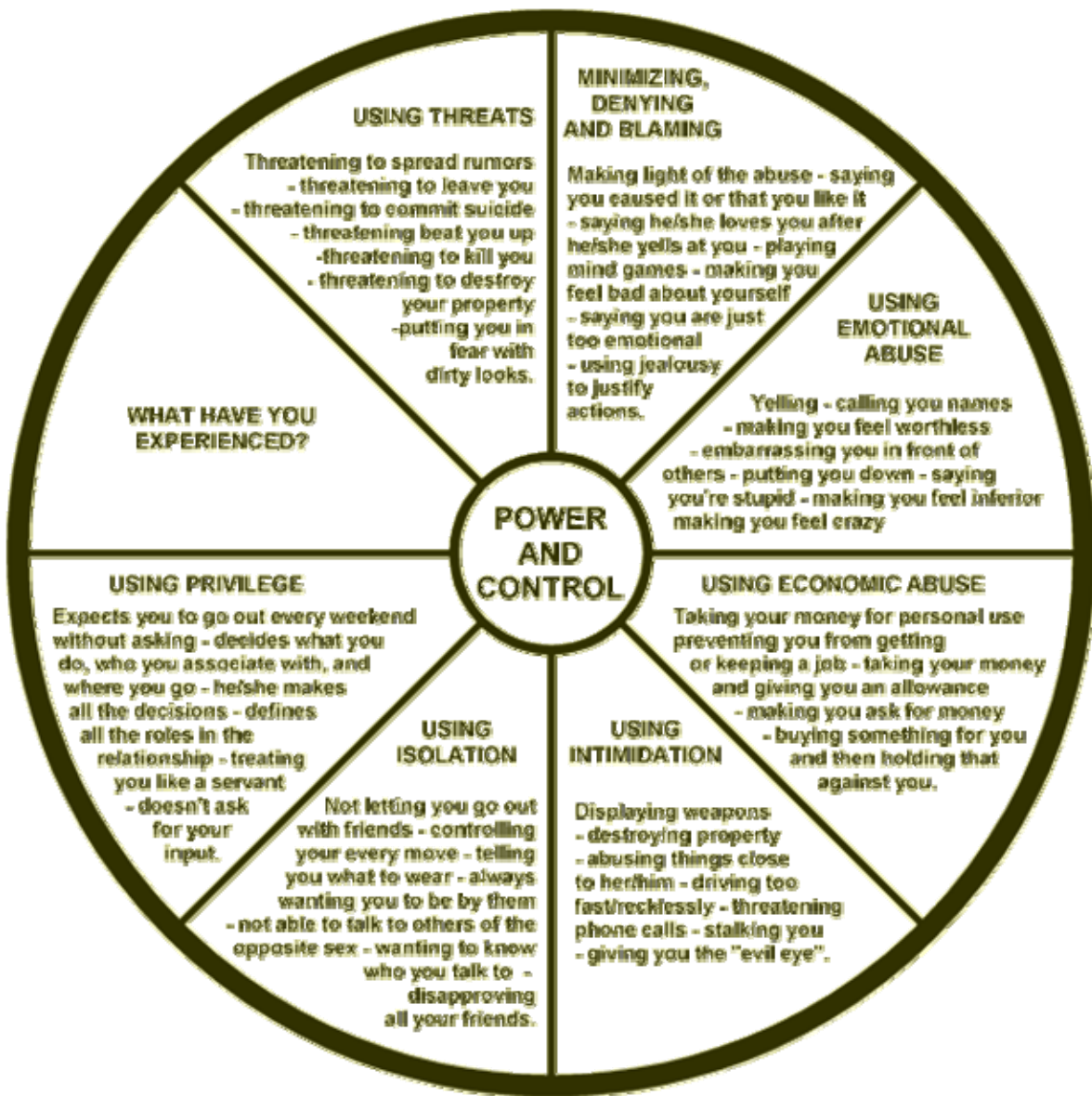
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Dating Violence

For hundreds of years, dating violence has been overlooked by the public; it seemed unimportant and scarce. There were few cases reported and the world seemed a safe enough place; at least harmless enough to enjoy a few dates. However, In the 1990's dating violence reached "unparalleled" ("Warning Signs of Youth Violence") highs. There are no set explanations for this rise, only the guess that citizens are becoming disrespectful toward themselves and others. Dating violence is one of the largest social issues that our world faces; there are numerous causes for its increase, however, the government offers little aid; education on this issue should be offered.

What causes a person to attack, yell, kick, punch, manipulate, or sexually abuse another? There is no simple answer since there are numerous factors that lead to violence. Frequently, people that abuse their partners are acting in a violent manor because they themselves have been abused and hurt by others. Some feel that they deserve respect and if they threaten and manipulate others then they will gain their respect ("Warning Signs of Youth Violence.") According to the APA Help Center, some abusers are abusive because they struggle with serious drug or alcohol use. They are a member of or have a strong desire to be in a gang. They are fascinated with weapons, especially guns. They threaten others regularly. They struggle controlling their feelings especially anger. They withdraw from friends and usual activities. They have strong feelings of loneliness or rejection. They were the victim of bullying. They have poor school performance. They have a history of breaking the law. They feel disrespected or they don't acknowledge the rights of others ("Warning Signs of Youth Violence.") Each situation is unique because of the many factors and circumstances that cause it. However, "violence is a learned behavior. Like all behaviors, it can be changed." ("Warning Signs of Youth Violence")

There are many reasons why an abuser abuses his/her partner. From threats and blaming to intimidation and physical attacks the methods that can be used against a loved one are numerous. The seven most frequent methods of abuse in dating relationships are displayed and explained in the “Power and Control” wheel below. This wheel was obtained by the Hands of Hope Resource Center.



(“Children and Teens Program.”)

There are a considerable number of teens that are involved in dating violence. In June of 2007, 683 teens were surveyed. The results revealed that fifty seven percent of thirteen to eighteen year olds reported having friends in abusive relationships. The results of this study validate the results of others that claim one in three teen relationships are physically or sexually abusive (Rath, Tiare.) Another survey took place among 500 young women. These women were between the ages of fifteen to twenty four. The survey showed that sixty percent were currently involved in an ongoing abusive relationship. They all, however, had been participants or experience dating violence in a relationship (Teen Dating Violence Statistics.) These surveys display the amount of dating violence that affects American communities. For such an appalling social ill dating violence is startlingly unrecognized.

“At present, most domestic violence statutes exclude minors, either by a requirement of cohabitation or marriage, or by an explicit requirement of adulthood.”(Suarez, Katheryn E.) The government offers little assistance to dating violence victims. However, they did pass the original Violence Against Women Act of 1994 and the renewed 2000 legislation. But these did not fund services for teens (Rath, Tiare.) This is quite ineffective because not all dating violence victims are female. This may help if the victim is in a domestic violence situation or an adult but, it is almost useless to teen victims. Liz Claiborne is one that wishes to create a program to educate students in high schools about teen dating violence. Unfortunately they receive “little to no government funding” (Rath, Tiare.) The government needs to educate the public about dating violence. Many people do not realize that they are in an abusive relationship until they are consumed by it. They need to be able to recognize the warning signs. The government should give funding to treatment centers where victims can go to receive help. Since abuse often occurs in a cycle; it would be logical for the government to provide a way to stop the cycle; before it reaches farther beyond the epic proportions that it is today. These violent acts affect more then just the people that are in them. If these couples get

married or have children; the children will be affected. The abusers are often a person that was abused or witnessed abuse in their homes or in the media. The government should not rely on private organizations to fix the problem for them. They need to help the country by educating the people about the warning signs and teach the importance of respect for others and themselves.

This social ill could be solved if people were educated and acted on one powerful principle, respect. There are six areas to respect; trust, accountability, safety, honesty, support, and cooperation.

People need to be educated on the issue of trust. This young girl tells her abusive relationship story. "The first time it happened, I was about fourteen and my boyfriend was sixteen. He saw me hug my brother in the hall at school, but he didn't know it was my brother 'cause we'd just started dating. He drug me out of school, behind a store and just beat me up – literally. He said if anyone asked me what happened, to tell 'em I got into a fight with someone; not to dare tell anyone he hit me." (Suarez, Kathryn E.) Trust has two parts. First accepting each other's word and second giving the benefit of the doubt. People need to be taught to trust those around them. If the sixteen year old boyfriend had trusted his girlfriend's word, then, this abuse would have not occurred because he would not have felt jealous knowing that the young man she hugged was her brother.

The second aspect of respect is accountability. People need to be taught to accept responsibility for their actions. For example: a young lady borrows her boyfriend's truck to go shopping at a nearby mall. He is out of town so she figures that it will be fine if she takes it a short distance to pick up a cute dress that she wants to wear when he got back. As she is driving to the mall she becomes distracted by her cell phone ringing and rear ends the car in front of her. Luckily the car she hit didn't have any damage but her boyfriend's truck was extremely damaged in the front. When he arrives home she needs to be able to accept the

responsibility for her actions by admitting that she created the damage and being willing to pay for the damage. If all relationships had accountability on each persons part there would be more respect for their partner and this would create more harmony.

Safety is the third factor in respect and it contains three parts. First, they must refuse to intimidate or manipulate their partner. The second, they respect physical space. Finally, they need to express themselves nonviolently and honestly. By committing themselves not to intimidate, manipulate, or physically hurt their partner they create a rational environment. This environment will give a feeling of safety and harmony and create a sturdy relationship.

The fourth principle of respect is honesty. In a successful relationship both partners must communicate openly and truthfully with each other. If both people are willing to be perfectly honest then it will allow there partner to trust them and will create a strong bond of trust between them. This will allow the relationship to grow.

The fifth principle of respect is support. There are six areas of support. First, each person needs to learn to support each other in their choices. If the couples are both supported by their partner then they will be more successful with there goals and actions, because they feel encouraged and will work harder for them. Secondly, they must be understanding toward their partner. The third is to offer encouragement to their partner. Listening non judgmentally is the fourth element. The fifth element of support is to value opinions. They need to be accepting of others thoughts and feelings. Finally, the Sixth area of support is to serve. If people are supportive of their partner and serve him/her; they are less likely to result to violence. Violence is a selfish act and by serving their partner they will feel more love and compassion to partner. An Artist doesn't smash his masterpiece. If they put their heart and soul into serving and helping their partner they are less likely to harm them.

The final area of respect is cooperation. Cooperation has five categories. The first is ask, not expect. Many times in a relationship one person will feel that their partner should do

a certain task or act a certain way. When they don't then they feel offended and act irrationally. If they only would ask or remind their partner then there would be a greater chance that their wishes would be granted. Secondly, accept change. For many, change is unwelcome and unpleasant feelings accompany it. People need to be taught to embrace it and learn from the experience. Third, the couple needs to learn to make decisions together. If they come to a mutual agreement in the first place; then they will feel happier whatever the outcome is, because there will be no one to blame. They did it together. Fourth, they need to be willing to compromise with their partner. Finally, they need to reach for mutual resolutions to resolve conflict. If they are able to learn how to resolve problems rationally then they will have a happier and stronger relationship.

Violence between teenagers is a social problem of epidemic proportion. It has been startlingly unrecognized by the government. (Hickman, Laura J.) It could be helped if the government and citizens work together to educate the public about this social ill and the need for respect. If everyone understood and acted with respect there would be no violence. Everyone should respect themselves and others; by acting with respect, we can change the world.

Works Cited

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