



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

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Myths and Facts about Dating Violence

Myth #1: It can't happen to me.

Fact: Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner – a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.¹ One in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend.³

Myth #2: Jealousy and possessiveness are signs of true love.

Fact: Jealousy and possessiveness are a sign one person sees their partner as being a possession. Jealousy is an indicator of lack of trust in one's partner. It is one of the most common early warning signs that a relationship will become abusive.

Myth #3: Relationship violence isn't really that serious.

Fact: Of the women murdered each year between the ages of 15-19, 30% are killed by a boyfriend or husband. The severity of intimate partner violence is often greater in cases where the pattern of abuse was established in adolescence.²

Myth #4: Men are abused by women just as often as women are abused by men.

Fact: Women ages 16-24 experience the highest per capita rates of intimate partner violence-nearly 20 per 1000 women.⁴ Among older teens, the percentage of violent crime involving an intimate partner was 10 times higher for females than males (9% vs. 0.6%).⁵

Myth #5: Alcohol and drugs cause a person to be abusive.

Fact: Many people who abuse their partner do not abuse alcohol or drugs, and many alcoholics/drug addicts do not abuse their partners. Furthermore, abusers who use chemicals do not necessarily stop their abusive behavior when they stop using.

Myth #6: Verbal or emotional abuse in a relationship is "no big deal."

Fact: Verbal and emotional abuse can have long-lasting effects, often longer lasting than the effects of physical abuse. Verbal abuse creates pain and trauma, and has been known to cause physical illness.⁶ Often, victims of verbal abuse begin to believe the negative messages their abuser has been giving them.

Myth #7: Abusers are not loving partners.

Fact: Abusive boyfriends/girlfriends are often described as being very loving, sweet, and attentive when they are not being abusive. It is often the hope that these positive behaviors will continue, which keeps the victim in the relationship. Sadly, there is almost always an end to the positive behaviors and a return to abusive behavior.

Myth #8: Abusers will stop the violence once they are married.

Fact: An abuser's suspiciousness and possessiveness is likely to increase along with an escalating rate of violence after marriage. Such behavior is a highly effective way for one person to maintain power and control in the relationship.

Myth #9: Victims bring on the abuse themselves; they ask for it.

Fact: Abusers believe they have a right to use violence to control their partner and they see the victim as being less than equal to themselves. The victim has no control over the abuser's behavior; it is **never** the victim's fault.

Myth #10: If a person stays in an abusive relationship, it must not really be that bad.

Fact: Nearly 80% of girls who have been physically abused in an intimate relationship continue to date their partner.⁷ Victims stay with their abusive partners for a variety of reasons. These include fear, confusion, loss of self confidence, not recognizing the behavior as being abusive, or a belief the abuser will cause further harm to the victim or him/herself.

References:

1. Futures Without Violence: Family Violence Prevention Fund
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2. Teens Experiencing Abusive Relationships:
<http://www.teensagainstabuse.org/index.php?q=statistics>
3. <http://www.loveisrespect.org>
4. U.S. Department of Justice:
<http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/ascii/ipva99.txt>
5. Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence:
http://www.pcadv.org/Resources/Briefing_TeenDatingViolence.pdf
6. <http://www.verbalabuse.com>
7. In the Mix:
http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/lessons/abusiverelationships_guide.html