

TEEN DATING SAFETY:

What Every Parent Should Know

What is teen dating violence?

Teen dating violence (TDV) is a pattern of behaviors used to **control, pressure, intimidate, or harm** someone in a dating relationship.

- Emotional/Verbal Harm (put-downs, insults, humiliation)
- Controlling Behavior (whom they see, what they wear, where they go)
- Sexual pressure or coercion (constant texting, tracking, posting, threats online)
- Physical harm or threats

TDV is about **power and control**, not “drama” or “normal teen conflict.”

A healthy teen relationship includes:

Respect, honesty, boundaries, trust, kindness, space for friends/family, and the ability to disagree without fear of repercussions.

Green flags: They feel more like themselves, not smaller.

Red flags: They feel anxious, monitored, or afraid to “mess up.”

Possible behavioral warning signs

One sign alone doesn't mean abuse - teens change a lot. But patterns matter.

You might notice:

- Pulling away from friends/family or activities they used to love
- Constant texting/calling and anxiety if they can't respond
- Sudden changes in mood, confidence, or behavior
- Fear of upsetting their partner
- A partner who is jealous, possessive, or controlling
- Pressure around sex or sharing passwords/photos
- Unexplained injuries, frequent “accidents,” or excuses for a partner's behavior
- Declining grades, missed school, or increased isolation

How to talk to your teen (without shutting them down)

Try: Curiosity + Calm + Consistency.

- “What does a healthy relationship feel like to you?”
- “Do you ever feel pressured to respond right away?”
- “What would you do if a friend felt unsafe with a partner?”
- “If anything ever feels off, I'm here - no judgment, no punishment.”



Helpful approach: Ask more than you tell. Listen longer than you speak. Be open and honest. **If they ask you for support, believe them and take them seriously.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO + RESOURCES

If you're worried your teen is being harmed

Your goal is safety and connection—not control.

1. **Believe them.** Thank them for telling you.
2. **Stay calm.** Strong reactions can make teens go quiet.
3. **Focus on safety first.** Ask: “Do you feel safe right now?”
4. **Avoid forcing a breakup.** Pressure can backfire or increase risk.
5. **Document what matters.** Save threatening messages, screenshots, and dates.
6. **Create a safety plan together.**
 - Code word to text you if they need help (ex. emoji or phrase)
 - Safe rides, safe places, safe adults
 - Block/report options and privacy settings
7. **Connect to support.** Advocacy and counseling help teens (and parents) navigate next steps.

Digital safety quick tips

- Keep accounts private; review location sharing and “Find My” settings
- Encourage strong boundaries around passwords and devices
- Talk about image-sharing risks and consent
- Remind them: **pressure isn't consent**, even online

If you're worried your teen may be *using* controlling behavior

This can be a **powerful** prevention moment.

- Name the behavior, not the identity: “That’s not okay, and we can address it.”
- Teach consent, boundaries, and emotional regulation
- Seek support early: counseling, education, restorative interventions
- Accountability + skill-building now can prevent harm later.

Your support (and response) matters

It's not just about what you say to them, but how safe they feel with you.

What teens need to from you (often):

- “You can talk to me.”
- “You won't be in trouble.”
- “I will help you, not judge you.”
- “You deserve respect and safety.”

LOCAL RESOURCES (fill in/customize)

- **In immediate danger: 911**
- **Cardinal Point/CCR Resources:** Call or Text: 405-776-0990
- **Local DV/SA hotline:** ICAN Hotline: 405-262-4455; Oklahoma State Safe Line: 1-800-522-7233
- **School counselor contact:** _____
- **Trusted adult(s):** _____
- **National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline (loveisrespect):** Call/Text/Chat available online

(Scan to view Cardinal Point and CCR Resources)

