

Parents: How to Help your Teen in a Abusive Relationship

Communicate openly and non-judgmentally about the violence.

Open doors for communication with comments like, "You look upset." Don't be accusatory. You may not get a response right away, but keep asking, and you will let her know that you want to talk and won't be judgmental; she will come to you when she's ready.

Take her seriously.

Saying, "forget him. There are plenty of guys out there," doesn't acknowledge her feelings.

Be patient. If changes take a while, your teen will need your ongoing support. Listen to her. Notice small changes as well as big ones. Recognize that even if she doesn't follow your suggestions, she knows that you are there to support her.

Acknowledge that you do not have power to control your teen, but you do have influence. Use your influence to tell her about the realities of violence, resources for help, your concerns about her safety and her future. Tell her "I'm afraid for you. I think this guy is dangerous." Remind her that jealousy is not love; it's control

Work together to make a safety plan. Try to agree on safe circumstances under which she may see her boyfriend. That way, she'll have a chance to think about her own safety, and to judge hi herself. Help her think about what she can do if she finds herself in an unsafe situation.

Make sure she knows what to do in an emergency, even if she denies that she is in danger. Tell her you will pick her up anywhere, any time, no questions asked. Let her know that she can trust you to hold up your end of the bargain.

Gather information so that you are prepared to take effective action. Find out what is actually going on in her relationship by asking her, her friends, her school. Call your local domestic violence organization and talk to a counselor about how you can help.

Support your teen's strengths. Encourage her in areas of her life other than her relationship. Appreciate the difficult decisions she does make to protect herself form her boyfriend's abuse, even if she is not breaking up with him.

Do not yell at her, tell her what she can and can't do and give her ultimatums- that is what her boyfriend is doing!