

PARENTS:

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DATING VIOLENCE ARE MOST PREVALENT IN ADOLESCENCE AND YOUNG ADULTHOOD

Data shows that sexual and domestic violence (SV/DV) start early in age and can have impacts throughout the lifespan. Often called teen dating violence in adolescence, 11 million women and 5 million men who report experiencing sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by a partner said that they first experienced this before the age of 18. While SV/DV impacts all people, some populations experience an increased risk for violence due to the social and structural conditions in which they live, work, and play. Youth from groups that have been marginalized, such as LGBTQ+ youth, are at greater risk of experiencing sexual and physical dating violence.¹



WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT?

Support strategies early in age that increase protective factors for youth.

Protective factors are characteristics or conditions that reduce or buffer the effects of risk, stress, or trauma.²

While teaching adolescents the skills to engage in healthy relationships and the skills to be responsible in all sexual interactions with others is important, we must also work with an adolescent's family, schools, and the larger community in order to prevent and end teen dating violence. Here are some strategies to increase protective factors that you can support in your community:



Teach Comprehensive Sexual Health and Healthy Relationships Skills

Comprehensive sex education that addresses communication, sexual respect, and consent can reduce SV/DV.³ Social-emotional learning programs promote expectations for mutual respect and non-violence in relationships and help youth develop skills such as empathy, healthy communication, and conflict resolution.



Create Protective Environments

Social and physical environments, like schools, that improve safety, social connections, and awareness of SV/DV can help create a climate that supports prevention efforts and sends a message that SV/DV is not tolerated.



Empower Girls and Other Marginalized Populations

Gender inequality in education, employment, and income is a risk factor for SV/DV. Therefore, improving access to education, providing economic leadership opportunities, and decreasing the gender pay gap for women—especially women with additional marginalized identities—can reduce the risk of SV/DV.⁴

Actions

1. **Connect with others!** Join friends, neighbors, and colleagues in conversations about how your community can prevent sexual assault and teen dating violence.
2. **Use your voice!** Speak to school administrators, community leaders, and elected officials about why these issues are a priority for you.
3. **Lead by example!** Be a model for other parents by engaging in respectful dialogue, speaking up on social justice issues, and fostering healthy relationships within your family.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021). *Fast facts: Preventing intimate partner violence*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>

² FRIENDS National Center. (2021). *Protective factors*. <https://friendsnrc.org/prevention/protective-factors/>

³ Future of Sex Education. (2016). *Building a foundation for sexual health is a K-12 endeavor: Evidence underpinning the National Sexuality Education Standards*. Advocates for Youth, Answer, SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change. <https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Building-a-foundation-for-Sexual-Health.pdf>

⁴ Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017). *Preventing intimate partner violence across the lifespan: A technical package of programs, policies, and practices*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-technicalpackages.pdf>

