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Know! Love Is Respect

Dating relationships can be tricky at any age, but especially for young people who are navigating uncharted waters. Have you talked to your tweens/teens about what positive, healthy dating relationships look like? There's no time like the present, as **February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month**.

We like to think of young love as innocent and sweet. But unfortunately, teen dating violence is much more common than most people realize. According to loveisrespect.org, **one in three teens will experience physical or sexual abuse, or both**. Therefore, it is critical for us to have ongoing conversations with our children on the subject.

"Dating violence is preventable, especially if education about healthy relationships starts early," said William Wubbenhorst, Associate Commissioner for the Family and Youth Services Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families. "This month and beyond we want educators, youth, and community leaders to join along with middle, high school and college students, to creatively promote messages about dating violence prevention, and raise awareness of the differences between healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships."

HEALTHY relationships are based on respect, communication, trust, honesty, and equality.

UNHEALTHY relationships include breaks in communication, pressure, dishonesty, struggles for control, or inconsiderate behavior.

ABUSIVE relationships involve accusations, blame shifting, isolation, pressure, or manipulation.

As we talk to our children about their romantic interests, whether present or future, we want to encourage them to...

LOOK FOR SOMEONE WHO:

- Treats you with respect.
- Doesn't make fun of things you like or want to do.
- Never puts you down.
- Doesn't get angry if you spend time with your friends or family.
- Listens to your ideas and can compromise with you.
- Isn't excessively negative.
- Shares some of your interests and supports you in pursuing what you love.
- Shares their thoughts and feelings.
- Is comfortable around your friends and family.
- Is proud of your accomplishments and successes.
- Respects your boundaries and doesn't abuse technology to violate your boundaries.
- Doesn't require you to "check in" or need to know where you are all the time.
- Is caring and honest.
- Doesn't pressure you to do things that you don't want to do.
- Doesn't constantly accuse you of cheating or being unfaithful.
- Encourages you to do well in school.
- Doesn't threaten you or make you feel scared.
- Understands the importance of healthy relationships.

When it comes to any relationship, mutual respect is key—plain and simple—but relationships can be complex. While some things (like physical or sexual violence) are clearly wrong and unacceptable, others may fall into an unclear, gray area for your tweens/teens. You can help your children understand the [relationship spectrum](#), from healthy to abusive.

Whether or not your tween or teen is presently in a "dating" relationship, this topic is relevant. Your decision to have ongoing conversations with your child on the subject is monumental. Knowing what to look for in a dating partner, as well as having high expectations from him or her, will serve your child well in dating relationships during their youth and into their adulthood.

In the tip to follow, the focus on Teen Dating Violence Prevention will continue as we highlight the importance of **Setting Boundaries in a Relationship**.

For more information, [visit loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).

Sources

- loveisrespect.org: Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

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