



Dating Violence

Lesson goal:

To improve students' understanding of dating violence and its prevention.

Students will learn:

- what dating violence is
- warning signs for dating violence
- what teens can do about dating violence
- assistance available to address dating violence

Suggested grade levels:

High school students

Materials:

Virginia Rules "Dating Violence," student handout

Dating Violence Scenarios lesson handout

Before the lesson:

1. Read the entire lesson plan.
2. Make copies of handouts and any activity/worksheets used in the lesson.
3. Identify appropriate resources for sexual and domestic violence in the local community and be ready to share these with students.
4. Give thought to appropriate local examples that will help students better understand the lesson.

Note to instructor: Consider offering a presentation for parents on teen dating violence prevention. The Virginia Department of Health, Division of Prevention and Health Promotion has established a teen dating violence prevention program and has developed a tip sheet for parents on recognizing signs of dating violence, available in both English and Spanish. <http://www.vahealth.org/injury/tipcards/teendatingviolence.pdf>

Introduction

Explain the following:

Today's lesson is part of the Virginia Rules Program, a program designed to help teens learn and live the law. The program provides teens with information about the laws of Virginia which are the rules by which we live.

Not knowing about laws is like trying to play a game or a sport without knowing the rules. It would be difficult to win the game – or even to be a good player – without knowing the rules. Knowing about laws is especially important because our society is based on the "rule of law."

Today's lesson focuses on dating violence. You will learn about:

- what dating violence is;
- warning signs for dating violence;
- what teens can do about dating violence; and
- assistance available to address dating violence.

Main presentation

What is dating violence?

Explain:

First, let's look at what dating violence is.

Dating violence is a kind of intimate partner violence that occurs between two people in a close relationship. It is a pattern of abusive behaviors by one partner against the other within the context of either casual dating or a long-term relationship

It can also take many forms, including psychological and emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Let's look at each form of dating violence.

Psychological and emotional abuse frequently involves one partner humiliating, insulting, or swearing at the other.

Other examples include: attempting to control a partner's activities, trying to destroy his or her self-confidence and self-esteem, and isolating the person from other friends and family.

Physical abuse includes such things as hitting, slapping, punching, shoving, kicking, biting, and hair-pulling. It also includes the use of a weapon, such as a club, knife, or gun, against a boyfriend or girlfriend.

While both teenage boys and girls report acting violently because they were angry, teenage boys are much more likely to use force in order to control their girlfriends, while girls more often act violently in self-defense.

Sexual abuse refers to forced or unwanted sexual activity or rape. It is also considered sexual abuse to coerce or pressure someone to engage in sexual activity or try to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Teenage girls are much more likely than teenage boys to suffer from sexual abuse.

Dating abuse can happen via technology, including cell phones and social media like Facebook. Communication at all hours of the day and night is often used as a way to control a partner.

Anyone can be a victim of dating violence.

In contrast to these abusive relationships, a healthy relationship is a connection between people that **increases well-being**, is mutually **enjoyable**, and enhances or maintains each individual's **positive self-concept**.

How frequently does dating violence occur?

Explain:

According to recent statistics, it is extremely likely that you or someone you know has experienced violence in a dating relationship. Fifty to 80 percent of teens report knowing someone involved in a violent relationship.

It is difficult to say exactly how frequently dating violence occurs because different studies and surveys ask about it in different ways and get very different results. Some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about psychological and emotional abuse and sexual violence. Estimates of dating violence among middle school and high school students range from 28 percent to 96 percent!

One recent national survey found that as many as one in five high-school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their partner in the past year.

Teens report that dating abuse via technology has become a serious problem. Cell phone calls and texting at all hours of the day and night are frequently used as weapons of control.

What are the warning signs for dating violence?

Explain:

Here are some important warning signs for dating violence. If you see these signs in any relationship, be alert to the possibility of dating violence.

Note to instructor: As you review these warning signs, ask students to think whether they have ever seen these signs either in their own or their friends' relationships.

- Soon after beginning to date, one partner pressures the other to make the relationship very serious.
- The partner becomes extremely jealous and possessive, and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
- The partner tries to control the other and to forcefully make all decisions, refusing to take the views or desires of the other seriously. He or she may also try to keep the other from spending time with close friends or family.
- The partner verbally and emotionally abuses the other by doing such things as yelling, swearing, manipulating, spreading false and degrading rumors, and trying to make the other feel guilty.
- The partner drinks too much or uses drugs and blames the alcohol and drugs for his or her behavior.
- The partner threatens physical violence.
- The partner has abused a previous boyfriend or girlfriend or accepts and defends the use of violence by others.

How can you tell if a friend might be in an abusive relationship?

Explain:

Your friend may be a victim of dating violence if he or she:

- often cancels plans at the last minute;
- worries about upsetting his/her partner;
- has injuries that cannot be explained, or explanations that do not seem true;
- frequently apologizes for his/her partner's behavior;
- gives up things that used to be important to him/her; and/or
- has a dramatic change in weight or appearance.

If you see any of these signs, be alert to the possibility of dating violence.

What should I do if I suspect a friend is in a violent relationship?

Explain:

If you suspect a friend is in a violent relationship, you might try to find out for sure by saying something such as, "You don't seem as happy as usual" or asking in general terms, "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

This non-confrontational and indirect approach may prompt your friend to reveal what's wrong.

Listen without judging, condemning, or giving unwanted advice.

If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she make a safety plan and get help.

A safety plan involves thinking about strategies and making preparations for escaping the relationship.

If you believe your friend is in serious danger, talk with an adult you trust immediately about your friend's situation so that you aren't carrying the burden by yourself.

Do not try to rescue your friend or be a hero and try to handle the situation on your own.

Information and assistance is available throughout Virginia through the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA). They have a toll-free number, the phone lines are open 24 hours a day, and calls are free and confidential. 1-800-838-8238.

Other resources are:

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline - 1-866-331-9474.

Love is Respect - <http://www.loveisrespect.org>

What should someone do if he or she is in a violent, or potentially violent, relationship?

It is important for a person in a violent relationship to realize the violence will not just stop or go away.

Someone who is in a violent, or potentially violent, relationship should talk to someone they trust and get information and assistance.

Note to instructor: Information about relevant local resources may be given at this time. Appropriate resources in Virginia communities can be located via the website of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA) at <http://www.vsdvalliance.org/>.

Is there help for someone who is violent toward his or her boyfriend or girlfriend?

Dating violence is both wrong and illegal.

Again, the best place to start is the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance hotline and website. Calls are toll-free and confidential and are answered 24 hours a day.

If you talk to a friend who you suspect is being abusive to a partner, remember that you are not trying to make them feel ashamed or embarrassed about their actions; the goal is to try to help them change their behavior.

Remind them that their violent actions could have consequences because this is a crime.

Urge them to seek help and encourage them to speak to a parent, counselor, coach, or any other adult they trust.

Offer to get them information such as the VSDVAA hotline, 1-800-838-8238, and remind them that all calls are free and confidential.

Learning activity

Divide the class into three mixed gender groups. It is important that both males and females work together to examine the issues of sexual assault and dating violence.

Explain that groups are to read all three scenarios, then discuss the four questions listed below for one of the scenarios. Group #1 should focus on scenario #1, Group #2 is to focus on scenario #2, and Group #3 is to focus on scenario #3.

1. Based on what you know about the warning signs for violence, what kinds of things are happening that would concern you?
2. What form of dating violence appears to be present?
3. If you were friends with either Cindy or Freddie, how would you react to their relationship?
4. What kinds of help might you offer either Cindy or Freddie?

Give groups 10 minutes to read the scenario and discuss the four questions.

Walk around and observe/listen briefly to the students’ discussions. Give students a “two-minute warning” at eight minutes. At the conclusion of the 10 minutes (or earlier, if students are finished), begin to call on groups.

Ask one or two volunteers from the group assigned scenario #1 to summarize their group’s discussion. Invite students in other groups to comment.

Repeat the process with groups assigned scenarios #2 and #3.

For each scenario make sure student groups identify the following:

	Scenario #1	Scenario #2	Scenario #3
1. Warning signs	Pressures the other to make the relationship very serious Keeps other from spending time with close friends or family	Extremely jealous and possessive, and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love Control, manipulation	Control, manipulation Violence in previous relationship Blames alcohol for behavior
2. Forms of dating violence	Psychological/emotional	Psychological/emotional	Psychological/emotional Physical violence

Note to instructor: Because of the prevalence of dating violence, it is likely that some student in the class will see patterns of abusive behavior in their own relationship or that of a friend. As each lesson concludes, encourage students who may be feeling confused or upset to talk with a teacher or counselor.

Review and recap

Explain:

Today we have talked about the serious problem of dating violence. You have learned:

- what dating violence is;
- warning signs for dating violence;
- what teens can do about dating violence; and
- assistance that is available through helplines and local resources to address dating violence.

Encourage students to visit the websites on their handout to learn even more about dating violence. These websites contain more in-depth information and assistance.

Thank students for their attention and participation in today's lesson.

Pre-/Post-Test Answer Key: Dating Violence

1. e
2. a
3. a
4. b
5. b
6. c
7. b
8. a
9. b
10. e

Dating violence scenarios

Please read the following scenarios and discuss the four questions that follow.

Scene #1

Cindy met Freddie at a party last month. She is 15 years old and Freddie is 17 years old. This is Cindy's first "serious" boyfriend and she is thrilled because he has a car of his own and is incredibly attentive to her. He has even bought her presents and has taken her to nice places! Since meeting, they have seen each other every day, usually spending a couple of hours together. He also calls four or five times a day and sends even more text messages. On most school days, he picks her up right after school. She has noticed that he doesn't like to wait on her; when she mentioned this, Freddie explained he just didn't want her to waste time when they could be together. Because she has been so busy with Freddie, Cindy has hardly seen her friends except at school. Her friends have been a little "cool" toward her, but she thinks it's probably just jealousy – Freddie is such a wonderful boyfriend! Cindy has been so busy with Freddie that she has decided not to try out for spring soccer.

Scene #2

It's been about two months since Cindy met Freddie at a party. Cindy loves Freddie paying so much attention to her, but she is beginning to be a little confused. Somehow, she keeps making him mad by doing really dumb things. For example, last week she was talking with Kevin after school; they were talking about a school project the teacher had assigned them to work on together and they were exchanging numbers so they could talk later about the project. Freddie was waiting for her and got really mad. When she got in the car, Freddie called her names and accused her of seeing Kevin behind his back. Cindy felt the whole scene was her fault because she kept Freddie waiting and she knew he didn't like to be kept waiting. That night, Freddie brought her flowers and told her he got mad because he just couldn't stand seeing her with someone else. Freddie reminds her every day that their relationship is special and that no one will ever love her like he does. Cindy knows this, but keeps doing dumb things that make Freddie mad.

Scene #3

The relationship continued into its fourth month and things got worse. Although she wanted to make him happy, nothing Cindy said or did seemed to please Freddie. She feels she is on a roller coaster. One moment Freddie would seem to be madly in love with her and she would dream of being his wife someday; in the next moment, he would find something she did wrong, tell her that no one else would put up with her, and threaten to break up if she didn't "shape up." Last night, Cindy could tell that Freddie had been drinking and he slapped her. Cindy wants to make Freddie happy more than anything, but last night scared her. She realizes she is scared of Freddie and scared of losing Freddie. Cindy is beginning to believe the rumor that Freddie beat up his former girlfriend. Today, Freddie brought her flowers and blamed his hitting her on the liquor.

Discussion Questions

1. Based on what you know about the warning signs for violence, what kinds of things are happening that would concern you?
2. What form of dating violence appears to be present?
3. If you were friends with either Cindy or Freddie, how would you react to their relationship?
4. What kinds of help might you offer either Cindy or Freddie?

To learn more

About Dating Violence

Virginia Department of Health, Division of Prevention and Health Promotion
<http://www.vahealth.org/injury>

National Center for Victims of Crime
<http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbName=DocumentViewer&DocumentID=37939>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Teen Dating Violence
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html

Love is Respect
<http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

Dating Violence Pre-/Post-Test

1. Dating violence involves:
 - a. A pattern of abusive behaviors
 - b. Abuse by one member of an unmarried couple directed at the other
 - c. A dating context
 - d. Emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse
 - e. All of the above

2. Dating violence occurs only in the context of serious long-term relationships.
 - a. False
 - b. True

3. A recent national survey found that _____ high school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year.
 - a. 1 in 11
 - b. 1 in 23
 - c. 1 in 34
 - d. 1 in 45
 - e. 1 in 52

Match the four behaviors described with the forms of dating violence listed (a. through c.):

4. Insulting, humiliating, swearing at, and manipulating his or her date. _____

5. Attempting to control a boyfriend's or girlfriend's activities; keeping the other from spending time with close friends or family. _____

6. Forced sexual activity; sexual activity with someone who is under the influence. _____

7. Spreading false and degrading rumors. _____
 - a. Physical abuse
 - b. Psychological/emotional abuse
 - c. Sexual abuse

8. If a girlfriend or boyfriend is patient and understanding, the dating violence will eventually stop.
 - a. False
 - b. True

9. Dating violence is both wrong and illegal.
 - a. False
 - b. True

10. If someone suspects a friend is in a violent dating relationship, he or she should:
 - a. Listen, without giving unwanted advice
 - b. Not try to “rescue” the friend
 - c. Let the friend know about 24-hour toll-free hotlines and websites devoted to the issue
 - d. Talk with an adult you trust if you think the friend is in serious danger
 - e. All of the above

