



Teen Dating Violence Action Sheet for Teens

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, a month meant to help teenagers understand what makes relationships healthy and unhealthy. To commemorate the month, the Serving Our Youth TA Project (servingouryouth.org) has compiled a list of tangible ways teens can take action to support their friends who are exposed to or are at risk of teen dating violence (TDV).

What can I do to help myself and my friends be in healthy relationships?

Check in with your friends about their relationships!

Ask friends about their relationships as part of your normal conversations. They might not open up right away--but consistently checking in will let them know that they can talk to you. If you see something concerning about the relationship, try to non-judgmentally tell them what you're noticing and that you care about their happiness. Try to avoid asking "why" questions. They can come off as judgemental and may make your friend feel defensive. Instead, here are some phrases you can try:

- "I noticed your partner did ___. How do you feel when that happens?"
- "Do you want to talk about it?"



Know the warning signs or "red flags" of an unhealthy relationship, and talk about them with your friends.

Knowing the warning signs ahead of time can help you avoid a relationship that's not good for you in the long-term. If your partner is constantly checking your phone or asking where you are, gets extremely jealous when you hang out with other people, calls you names, or pressures you to do sexual things you don't want to--these could be warning signs of abuse. To learn other "red flags", [check out this article from Love Is Respect](#) (1).

Know and celebrate the positive signs or "green flags" of a healthy relationship, and share them with your friends.

If your partner respects you when you need space, makes you feel cared for and special, supports your hobbies and passions, and respects your friends--these are signs of a healthy relationship. But what everyone wants as part of a relationship is different! It's up to you to decide what's a "green flag". To learn more about healthy relationships, [check out this article from Love Is Respect](#) (2).

What can I do to help my friends if they're being abused by their partner?

First, tell your friend you believe them and that you're there for them.

It takes a lot of courage for someone to open up about TDV, and they might be afraid of people not believing them or blaming them for the abuse. Saying something as simple as "Thank you for telling me this. I believe you, and you don't deserve this. I'm here for you no matter what," can be really powerful to your friend.

If they're ready, encourage them to talk to a trusted adult.

Especially if your friend is at risk of violence, it's important that an adult who can help knows about the situation. This could be a family member, teacher, school counselor, or any other trusted adult. They can make sure your friend is safe, and let them know about the different kinds of help that are available at your school or in your community. It's important for this to be your friend's decision. Offer going with them to talk to an adult or let them know about the anonymous text/chat line at lovesirepect.org.



Let them know their options.

Depending on their situation, your friend might want different kinds of help. They might want to talk to a school counselor or therapist about what's been happening. If they're being hurt, they might want to receive an order of protection (which an adult can help you get). They might just want someone to listen to what's going on. If they've just broken up, they might want to block or mute their ex on social media, and have someone walk with them between classes or after school to make sure they're not alone. Ask what kind of support they want, and how you can help them.

- "That sounds really hard. I'm here for you."
- "I'm worried about you. Is there anything I can do to help you feel safer?"
- "Have you heard of lovesirepect.org? You can talk to them anonymously 24/7 and they give great advice."

Be patient if your friend decides to stay in the relationship.

Your friend may decide to stay in their unhealthy relationship, or break up and get back together several times. In fact, **on average it can take someone 7 times** to break up and get back together before they leave their abusive partner for good (3). But getting frustrated or telling someone to "just break up" might make them not want to talk to you. As hard as it might be, let your friend know you're there for them no matter what, and you can help them when they're finally ready to break up.

If you have more questions about dating, relationships, or teen dating violence. . .

A great resource is Love Is Respect.

They have a website (www.loveisrespect.org) with different articles and quizzes about dating and relationships, boundaries, and how to help a friend.

Additionally, if you or someone you know is being abused, Love Is Respect has an online chat line, text line, and hotline where you can ask their trained team for advice or just have someone listen.

- Online chat line: Click “Chat line now” at the bottom of www.loveisrespect.org
- Textline: Text “love is” to 25222
- Hotline: 1-866-331-9474



Links Referenced

1. <https://www.loveisrespect.org/dating-basics-for-healthy-relationships/warning-signs-of-abuse/>
2. <https://www.loveisrespect.org/everyone-deserves-a-healthy-relationship/>
3. <https://tinyurl.com/BarriersToLeaving>