

love is
respect •



be about it

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month 2023 • Action Guide

Welcome to TDVAM 2023!

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) is a campaign to amplify the needs of youth and their experiences with dating abuse. In 2010, Congress declared Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month each February. Teens, young adults and their loved ones join together to spotlight this pervasive and harmful issue, and how prevention and education can change the outcomes for those impacted by it.

This guide includes:

- Navigating healthy relationships
- Warning signs of unhealthy relationships
- On-campus experiences
- Technology & culture
- Online harassment
- Supporting teens & young adults (a special section for adult helpers)
- Self-care
- Community resources

At love is respect, we use the gender-neutral term “partners” to refer to people in an intimate relationship but you may use a different term like cuffing, kicking it, situationship, etc. No matter what language you use, it’s essential to make sure you’re on the same page with your partner.

be
about
it



A message from the love is respect Director

Hello Friends,

Uplifting healthy relationships is our focus for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) 2023. This year’s theme “Be About It” was chosen by our amazing national love is respect Youth Council as a continuation of last year’s theme “Talk About It.”

We want to join you to unapologetically be about education, engagement, and empowerment. Out with the societal norms within relationships. No labels. Your life is your choice, and you deserve a healthy relationship, free from violence. Join us as we amplify your voice, focus on some key topics you may be facing, and how to navigate a healthy relationship.

—Angela Lee

Be about education

Learning is an ongoing experience. It can be tough to know how to [navigate relationships](#), let alone know what makes them healthy or unhealthy. There are [warning signs](#) to look out for in a relationship. We'll also list below some key elements of a healthy relationship. Exploring relationships can be daunting, but it's also an exciting way to learn more about yourself, what you need and want in a relationship!

[How do I know if my relationship is healthy?](#)

Your relationship may be sexual (though it does not have to be) or not, serious or casual, gay or straight, monogamous or open, short-term or long-term. No matter what your relationship looks like communication, trust, honesty, and equality are [some key elements](#) to [a healthy relationship](#).



Boundaries

Boundaries are yours to build but it can be scary to ask for what you need from your partner. When you trust your feelings and know your needs, communicating boundaries with your partner is so empowering. Trust yourself!

Boundaries define what each person is comfortable with and how you would like to be treated by others. Boundaries help you honor your needs, feelings, and values. To learn more about some different types of boundaries check out the links below.

- [Physical boundaries](#)
- [Emotional boundaries](#)
- [Digital boundaries](#)

Love is more than you feel.



**ROCHELLE CHUKWUMA,
YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER**

When we reduce love to only a feeling, we do ourselves a disservice. Each of us deserves people in our lives who not only say they love us but also act like it.

Because humans are complex, it's possible to care deeply about someone who says they love you but acts in ways that make you question it. If you're questioning your relationship, I encourage you to take a deep dive into love is respect. The truth is in the name! Love is more than a feeling; it's safety, security, and respect!

Be about engagement

Coming back to campus after almost 3 years of virtual school and work, due to COVID-19, may have its challenges. You might be in a situation where you or someone else needs help. How would you safely engage in the following scenarios?

SCENARIO 1: *You are in the restroom, and your friend walks in. They look upset and shocked. They share with you that their partner is pressuring them to have sex but they aren't ready yet.*

Possible responses:

- “You have more to offer a relationship than just sex.”
- “You deserve better than someone who doesn't respect your sexual boundaries.”
- “I understand what you're feeling, how can I help?”



SCENARIO 2: *Someone is being verbally or physically aggressive towards a peer in an isolated corner of the gym. The person being confronted looks frightened and uncomfortable.*

Possible responses:

- Create a distraction by interrupting the argument. This may look like asking the individual if they want to join you and your friends for lunch.
- Visit the person who was frightened later in the day to let them know what you observed was concerning, and not okay. Let them know they deserve better than that.
- Get a staff member involved. It's important to know the [resources available](#).

Be about safety online

Online harassment

It can be hard to find a balance between online and offline safety, but it's something to consider when you're engaging in relationships.

We discovered in our [2022 Online Abuse and Harassment Survey](#) that the most common setting in which online harassment occurred was on social media (70%) and via text or other messaging apps (78%).

Because you've grown up relying on online connection, relationships and communities, it's important to know [how technology and the internet can affect your relationship](#). What's happening online may be an extension of what is happening IRL, or it could be isolated, especially if your relationship only exists online/in-app.

It's important to note that [some people](#) may face a greater risk of harassment online and IRL due to inequities based on race, gender, sexuality, ability,

class, education, and any number of other identifications. For example, in the [LGBTQIA+ community](#):

- Emotional and psychological harm can cause levels of internalized homophobia;
- Invalidation of your own identity can result in hiding your identity on and offline.

be
about
it

Here are some questions to consider when discussing your [digital boundaries](#).

Social media has also allowed us to talk about these issues on a wider scale and to take more active steps towards changing it and being about it. Gen Z and Millennials have demanded greater accountability and called for action to remove harmful and hateful rhetoric online.



Know better. Do better.



GABRIELLA SHAPIRO,
YOUTH COUNCIL MEMBER

Once we know better, we can do better. We must be about moving toward healthy relationships, not just talking about them! Relationship violence impacts all ages, cultures, and abilities, which is why it is such an important topic.

Let's be willing to tell our loved ones about the unhealthy or toxic patterns we notice. More importantly, let's support them in figuring out the next steps. For TDVAM 2023, let's take the necessary steps and be about healthy relationships!

Be about empowerment

Empowerment means you have power and control over your own life. When you seek out ways to empower one another, everyone benefits. You're actively participating in your own life by creating a better sense of community for yourself and others.

Self-care

Self-care is incredibly important for your individual health, but not everyone knows what it is or how to start. Use our [self-care checklist](#) to kick off your empowerment journey. You matter!

Support each other

- Ask your partner what they need from a relationship
- Reflect on positive memories together
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Agree to disagree
- Celebrate each other



Support for parents, educators, and helpers

If you are a parent or regularly interact with teens or young adults, encourage them to talk about healthy relationships.

Helpers serve a crucial role by supporting and taking action if they suspect a teen or young adult is going through an unhealthy or abusive relationship.

Download our [parent discussion guide](#) created in partnership with The Allstate Foundation to start a conversation about healthy relationships.

Youth want and need your support.

Your community

A support system can help you define and maintain a healthy, loving relationship. Here are some community resources you can turn to.

Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services (ADWAS): provides services to deaf, deafblind, and deaf-disabled survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault • adwas.org

Brown Boi Project: a community of people working across race and gender to eradicate sexism, homophobia, and transphobia and create a healthy framework of masculinity and change • brownboiproject.org

HEART: ensures that Muslims have the resources, language, and choice to nurture sexual health and confront sexual violence • hearttogrow.org

LGBT National Help Center: serving the LGBTQ+ community by providing free and confidential peer support and local resources. Call 1-800-246-7743 or chat • lgbthotline.org

National Runaway Safeline: 24/7 free support for homeless and at-risk youth. Call 1-800-RUNAWAY or visit their website • 1800runaway.org/youth-teens

Scarleteen: inclusive, comprehensive, supportive reproductive and relationships info for teens • scarleteen.com

StrongHearts: 24/7 free, confidential, and culturally relevant support for Native American and Alaska Native teens and young adults experiencing dating abuse and sexual violence. Call 844-7NATIVE (762-8483) or chat live • strongheartshelpline.org

The Trevor Project: provides 24/7 confidential crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ teens and young adults under 25. Call 1-866-488-7386, text START to 678678, or chat live • thetrevorproject.org

Your Life Your Voice: supporting parents, families, and children in times in need. 24/7 hotline, text, or email • yourlifeyourvoice.org



love is respect is here for you

love is respect is a safe, inclusive space where teens and young adults can access information and get support in an environment designed specifically for them.



A project of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, love is respect offers 24/7 information, support, and advocacy to young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have questions or concerns about their romantic relationships.

A huge thank you to the love is respect National Youth Council and our love is respect Advisory group!

- StrongHearts
- Harbor NW
- SADD
- onelove
- CD Solutions
- Ujima
- Esperanza United



This project was supported by Grant Number 90EV0459 from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.