

SMARTALK

News and Information about PPHP Education and Training Programs and Resources

Helping Teens Recognize Unhealthy Relationships

When professionals and parents think about teens and sexuality, they often focus only on sex. In fact, teens are really concerned about relationships; discerning between healthy and unhealthy relationships, understanding how to communicate with their partner and recognizing the importance of trust in a relationship. All too often teens find themselves in unhealthy relationships and become the victims of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

The statistics on teen dating violence are startling. One in three teenagers report that they've been the victim of dating violence. Forty percent of teenage girls, ages 14-17, report knowing someone their age who has been hurt by a boyfriend. Nearly eighty percent of girls who have been physically abused in their intimate relationships continue to date their abuser and one in four teenage girls reveal they have been pressured to perform oral sex or engage in intercourse.

Teens are new to romantic relationships and as professionals, we need to help them identify the signs of an unhealthy and potentially abusive relationship. Abusive behaviors are frequently overlooked or misread as terms of endearment. Young women, eager for attention and acceptance, may stop seeing friends or family their boyfriend's don't like. Incessant put-downs or extreme jealousy are often ignored and then internalized, damaging the young woman's self esteem and confidence. Even if a teen recognizes that s/he is in an abusive, or potentially abusive, relationship, s/he may find it difficult to admit and embarrassing to talk about.

It is up to adults to get involved if a teen is being hurt or isolated by a boyfriend or girlfriend. It may be important to inform a parent of your concerns. Parents and professionals must listen to the teen without judging and resist blaming the teen for making poor choices. Teens need to be reassured that being abused is not their fault. It is important to validate the teen's feelings and take them seriously. A teen may believe s/he is in love despite the abuse. Offer patient support. It is important that the teen end the unhealthy relationship on his or her own, and learn how to establish healthier relationships in the future. Here are some tips for parents and professionals:

- Allow the teen as much control as possible. The abuser has taken away the teen's power and sense of self. You can help restore it.
- Reassure the teen of your love, concern, and wish to help.
- Call a domestic violence agency or hotline for information and advice. The national Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-SAFE.
- If possible, get the teen to see a counselor; preferably, one who specializes in teen relationship abuse.
- If the abuser attends the same school, help the teen determine who at the school the teen can talk to and make part of a safety plan.
- If the teen breaks up with the abuser, be aware that the break-up period is the most dangerous time. Contact a domestic violence agency about how to get an order of protection.

Domestic Violence Agencies

Westchester County

My Sister's Place

Hotline: (800) 298-7233

Information: (914) 683-1333

Hope's Door

Hotline: (888) 438-8700

Information: (914) 747-0828

Victim's Assistance Services

Helpline: (914) 345-9111 or

(800) 726-4041

Information: (914) 345-3113

Suffolk County

Brighter Tomorrows

Hotline: (631) 395-1800

Information: (631) 395-3116

Suffolk County Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Hotline: (631) 666-8833

Information: (631) 666-7181

Victims Information Bureau of Suffolk (VIBS)

Hotline: (631) 366-3606

Information: (631) 360-0089

Rockland County

Rockland Family Shelter

Hotline: (845) 634-3344

Information: (845) 634-3391

Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic Training Calendar

The fee for each session is \$25 and includes a light breakfast and materials.

To register: Call Melissa Ptak at (631) 240-1130 or email melissa.ptak@pphp.org



Wednesday, November 18, 2009 (9:30am-1:30pm) **Sexuality, Reproductive Health and Latinos: Reducing the Disparities.**

Location: Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic,
70 Maple Avenue, Smithtown NY 11787

Trainer: Giokazta Molina Schneider, Planned Parenthood
of Nassau County

Learn how cultural influences can promote healthy sexuality and family communication around sex.

Thursday, November 19, 2009 (9:30am-1:30pm)

It's More than the Law: Adolescent Sexuality and their Rights

Location: Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic

175 Tarrytown Road, White Plains NY 10607

Trainer: Stacy Silverstein, Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic

This workshop will provide guidelines to minors' reproductive rights in New York State, identify who is bound by confidentiality and delve into issues on adolescent sexual behavior.



December 3 (9:30am -1:30pm)

It's More than the Law: Adolescent Sexuality and their Rights

Location: Planned Parenthood of Nassau County

540 Fulton Avenue, Hempstead NY 11550

Trainer: Christina Noonan, Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic



December 10 (9:30am-1:30pm)

Older , Wiser, Sexually Smarter:

Teaching Sexuality to Older Adults

Location: Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic

175 Tarrytown Road, White Plains NY 10607

Trainer: Bill Tavener, Planned Parenthood
of Greater Northern New Jersey

Often we think of sexuality as a topic to teach teens and young adults. But sexuality continues to change, deepen and mature as we mature. Join us to learn how to discuss sexuality issues with older adults and learn about your own sexuality as well.