

# Protecting our Daughters

As parents, we are bombarded with advice about the importance of communicating with our children, especially teenagers. We see public service announcements about talking with our teenagers, and how vital such communication is to the parent-child relationship.

Sexual issues and the dangers of drugs are the usual recommended topics for discussion. One seldom hears about another, equally important matter - dating violence.

Dating violence can be defined as a variation of domestic violence, since the core issue is an abusive or potentially abusive relationship, in this case between the dating partners. Usually, the person at risk in the dating situation is the girl.

Parents should be aware that the following could be signs that their daughter is involved in an abusive or potentially abusive relationship.

- The dating partner attempts to control her
- The dating partner makes derogatory remarks about her appearance
- The dating partner tries to isolate the girl from her friends

- The dating partner attacks her self-esteem, for example, calling her stupid
- The dating partner appears clearly to be in charge
- The dating partner puts down females in general
- The dating partner has been verbally abusive
- The dating partner may be an academic under achiever, belittling her for studying
- The daughter has injuries without a logical explanation for how they occurred

As difficult as it may be, the parents should not forbid their daughter from seeing her boyfriend, as this will be likely to make the forbidden relationship very attractive. If any of the previous signs of an abusive or potentially abusive relationship appear, the parents should call their local health or social services department to obtain a referral to a domestic violence program. Program counselors will assist the parents to develop a plan for dealing constructively with the situation.

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