

# TEEN TURNING POINTS



## Healthy Dating Relationships

When teens begin dating, it's a chance for them to explore themselves and to develop maturity in relationships. However, if teens become involved in unhealthy relationships, they can be harmed both emotionally and physically. Their emotional development may be affected, and they may not learn how to build emotionally healthy relationships.

### **Building Healthy Relationships**

Knowing how to build a healthy relationship from the start can help prevent dating violence. When getting to know someone, avoid dating situations that could be dangerous. Avoid going to places where you'll be alone with one another until you know your partner. Go on double dates or go to public places instead.

Be in control. Don't use alcohol or drugs, which can impair your ability to think clearly and act quickly in a dangerous situation. Pay your own way and have your own transportation to and from the date. Avoid feeling like you are "in debt" to your partner or "owe" him or her something. Communicate clearly with your partner. Let them know that you will not tolerate guilt-tripping or abuse of any kind, and you will not do anything you don't want to do.

Trust your instincts. Get to know the person before going out with them. Talk on the phone, have conversations via text, or meet in a group of friends. If the person is impatient or refuses to discuss your concerns, that's a sign to stop the relationship.

### **Healthy Relationships**

In a healthy relationship:

- You trust your partner, and you treat each other the way you want to be treated.
- Your partner likes your friends/family and encourages you to spend time with them and also wants to include them in his or her life.
- You support and encourage each other in your interests, passions, and goals.
- You enjoy time away from each other as well as spending time together.
- You are not afraid to speak your mind, and it is okay if you and your partner don't agree.
- Your partner doesn't force or pressure you into sexual activity or doing anything that make you uncomfortable.
- You both feel safe in the relationship.

### **Recognize Unhealthy/Addictive Relationships**

Think twice about going out with someone who:

- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.
- Shows angry, aggressive outbursts or extreme jealousy.
- Wants to be in control of what you do and where you go.
- Is physically rough with you (pushing, grabbing) or drives recklessly.

If you are already dating someone with some of these traits, discuss your concerns with your partner. It's never too late to make your feelings clear. If this leads to more abuse, get help.

### **Addictive Relationships**

A relationship is not healthy if:

- You believe you can't live without your partner.
- You enjoy spending time away from your partner less and less, and it feels like you're killing time until you see him/her again.
- You don't make decisions or plans without him or her.
- You have fewer and fewer happy times together and more time spent on promises, apologies, guilt, and fear.

### **Where to Get Help**

If you have been physically harmed, get medical attention. If you fear you'll be harmed, seek safe shelter and call the police. Whether you're a victim or an abuser, get counseling, even if the abuse happened long ago. Getting emotional help through counseling is essential to understanding how and why the violence occurred—and how to avoid it in the future. Talk to a friend, member of the clergy, or call Crisis Services, at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where someone is always available. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. You may also call the Flint YWCA domestic violence shelter at (810) 238-SAFE [www.genhs.org](http://www.genhs.org)

