

RELATIONSHIP ABUSE: see it. stop it. help a friend.

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

A healthy relationship is characterized by mutual respect, equality, trust, communication and freedom. Each person is allowed to be an individual within the relationship. Both people grow independently of each other as well as grow as a couple.

WHAT IS AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP?

Relationship abuse is a pattern of behaviors used to maintain power and control over a partner. ***Abuse can be emotional, financial, sexual or physical*** and can include threats, isolation or intimidation.

FACT: AT LEAST ONE IN THREE WOMEN WILL HAVE BEEN ABUSED IN HER LIFETIME.*

They are people we know and people we care about. Relationship abuse happens to people of all ethnicities, in both gay and straight relationships. However, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice 2003 Statistics Crime Data Brief, ***intimate partner violence is primarily committed against women.***

*Heise, L., et al. *Ending Violence Against Women. Population Reports, Series L, No. 11.*, December 1999

WARNING SIGNS OF ABUSE:

The following questions ask you about your relationship. If you are not currently in a relationship, these are signs or "red flags" to assist people in identifying a potentially abusive person.

- Do you feel nervous around your partner?
- Do you have to be careful to control your behavior to avoid his/her anger?
- Do you feel pressured by your partner when it comes to sex?
- Are you scared of disagreeing with your partner?
- Does your partner criticize you, or humiliate you in front of other people?
- Does your partner always check up on you or question you about what you do without him/her?
- Does your partner repeatedly and wrongly accuse you of seeing or flirting with other people?
- Does your partner tell you that if you changed he/she wouldn't abuse you?
- Does your partner's jealousy stop you from seeing friends or family?
- Does your partner make you feel like you are wrong, stupid, crazy or inadequate?
- Has your partner ever scared you with violence or threatening behavior?
- Does your partner prevent you from going out or doing things you want to do?
- Do you often do things to please your partner, rather than to please yourself?
- Do you feel that, with your partner, nothing you ever do is good enough?
- Does your partner say that he/she will hurt you or himself/herself if you break up?
- Does your partner make excuses for behavior, for example, by saying it's because of alcohol or drugs, or because he/she can't control his/her temper, or that he/she was "just joking"?

WHY DO SURVIVORS STAY? There are many reasons, here are only a few:

- ***Fear:*** she's afraid of what her partner might do to her if she leaves, she's afraid no one will believe her, she's afraid of what people might think of her if they know she's being abused
- ***Forced contact:*** she has to see her partner all the time on campus, her partner is friends with all of her friends and leaving the relationship may mean losing some of these friends
- ***Forgives:*** she forgives her partner; many abusive relationships do not start off abusive and do not feel abusive 100% of the time; she may believe her partner's promises to change
- ***Fatigue:*** she has tried leaving before and it didn't work

BUT A BETTER QUESTION TO ASK IS—WHY DO ABUSERS ABUSE?

- ***Abuse is a choice.***
- They believe they can get away with it. No one held them accountable in the past.
- They want to control their partner. They want power over their partner.
- They believe they are entitled to do whatever they want to their partner.
- Their excuses ("It's because of drugs/alcohol," "I just lost my temper,") are accepted by others.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND:

- Listen, without judging. Be there to support her.
- Tell her that the abuse is not her fault. There is no excuse for abusive behavior and it is never acceptable.
- Empower her to make her own decisions. Don't be another person to control her.
- Get advice and direct her to resources.

RESOURCES:

National Relationship Abuse hotline – 1.800.799.7233 (24 hours, confidential)

RAINN: Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network – (800) 656-4673 (24 hours, confidential)

For more information see stoprelationshipabuse.org