



### Is this Love: Teen Dating Violence

**R** & B singers Rhianna and Chris Brown made news headlines with their violent dating relationship. On the night before the Grammy music awards, while sitting in a luxurious sports car, Chris Brown punched, choked and bit Rhianna, according to police records.

He threatened her life, he shoved her head against the car window and he bloodied her mouth. Despite being well known and famous, this couple is only one of many young couples that are in a violent dating relationship.

Are you in a relationship that is abusive or could turn violent? Do you know somebody who is?

#### Who does it affect?

Young people between the ages of 16 to 24 are at the highest risk for dating violence. One in five teens in a serious relationship report having been hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner, and physically or sexually abused. You may know others who have been hurt, hit, punched, kicked or slapped by their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Dating violence happens in straight and gay relationships, in casual and serious relationships, in wealthy and not-so-wealthy homes, and among any race. In short, dating violence may happen to anyone at any time. Some violence may happen only once in a while, and some violence may be very frequent between the partners.

#### What is it?

How do you know if you are in a healthy relationship or one that could become violent and unsafe? Teen dating violence is not an occasional argument or a bad mood after a hard day. It is a *pattern* of controlling, abusive and aggressive behavior that can cause injury and even death.

#### Love is Trusting

*It isn't keeping tabs with the obsessive calls and texts*

#### Love is Secure

*It isn't being jealous, suspicious or paranoid*

#### Love is Accepting

*It isn't telling someone what to do, what to wear or how to act*

#### Love is Freedom

*It isn't about possessing anyone or anything*

[www.loveisrespect.com](http://www.loveisrespect.com)

Continuing in this kind of unhealthy relationship can be dangerous. You may be involved in a potentially abusive relationship if your dating partner shows one or more of the following:

- Control
- Verbal and emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse

#### Controlling behavior may include:

- Calling or texting multiple times to know where you are and who you are with.
- Trying to keep you from spending time with your friends or family.
- Taking charge and making most of the decisions in your relationship.
- Spreading rumors or posting personal conversations and information about you on your MySpace or Facebook page.
- Telling you what to wear.
- Having to be with you all the time.

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**Verbal and emotional abuse may include:**

- Name calling (“ugly, stupid, worthless, fat”).
- Being jealous of friends, coworkers, family.
- Threatening to hurt you, your family or themselves if you don’t do what they want
- Blaming you for whatever goes wrong.

**Physical abuse may involve:**

- Pushing
- Hitting
- Shoving
- Kicking
- Slapping
- Hair pulling
- Pinching
- Choking

**Sexual abuse may include:**

- Unwanted touching and kissing.
- Pressuring or forcing sexual contact or intercourse.
- Not letting you use birth control.

**Jeremy and Salina: Is this violence?**

Jeremy and Salina have been dating for three months. Salina decided at the last minute to attend the school dance with her girlfriends.

During the dance, Jeremy texted Salina’s cell phone 45 times within an hour. “Who are you dancing with? Are you wearing my favorite blue blouse for the boys? Keep away from Chad or I’ll beat you both” were some of the messages he sent.

Jeremy is attempting to control Salina through threats and intimidation. Salina feels guilty for attending the dance without him. She also feels threatened and is afraid of him. She thinks that if she does not cooperate with him, he may break up with her or he may harm her. Salina and Jeremy have a relationship that involves dating violence.

**How can I tell if I am in an abusive relationship?**

Trust your instincts. If you sense you are in an unhealthy relationship, you probably are. Your

stomach might be tight or your body tense.

Other signs include:

- You are frightened by the other person’s anger, jealousy and control.
- You think that the poor treatment your partner gives you is your fault.
- You feel anxious and do not trust what your partner may do next.
- You feel angry, sad, lonely, depressed and confused.
- You are afraid or embarrassed to talk to family or friends about this relationship.
- You are afraid of getting hurt, feel unsafe and are fearful.
- You feel worthless and your self-esteem is not boosted by spending time with your date.
- You stick up for your boyfriend or girlfriend.
- You have bruises or injuries from your partner.

**Your Rights**

It is not your fault if you are in a relationship that is violent or has the signs of possible violence. It is not happening because of what you have said, done or what you wear. Nobody has the right to be controlled, hurt, threaten or scared.

You have the right to:

- Be treated with respect.
- Be in a healthy relationship.
- Not be hurt physically or emotionally.
- Refuse sex or affection at any time.
- Have friends and activities apart from a boyfriend or girlfriend.
- End a relationship.

**How can you get help?**

Get help right away. If you are hurt, get medical help immediately. Be honest with the staff about your situation. If you are not physically harmed but worried about your dating relationship, talk to

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someone you trust: a friend, parent, teacher, parent of a friend, or school counselor.

Try to spend more time with family and friends than with your boyfriend or girlfriend. During a disagreement with your partner, walk away before it gets out of control. Consider getting counseling for yourself too.

If you know friends who are in an abusive relationships, listen to them, tell them you worried and offer support by finding people to help.

Contact the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org) for resources. Locate

Wisconsin resources at <http://www.wcasa.org/> or in the phone book under crisis intervention services.

To learn other ways to support a friend go to, <http://www.seeitandstopit.org>.

Teens are at high risk for dating violence. Listen to your body and intuition. Are you in a safe and healthy relationship or is there a pattern of control and abuse? By learning more about the warning signs and your rights to be respected, you will be on the road to a healthy dating relationship. You deserve it!



### Resources/References

- **Rhianna and the Reality of Abuse**, March 10, 2009, and **Can Love and Abuse Co-Exist?** April 29, 2009, National Public Radio <http://www.npr.org/>
- **National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline** [www.loveisrespect.com](http://www.loveisrespect.com).
- **Dating Violence Resource Center** [http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB\\_DatingViolenceResourceCenter101](http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/main.aspx?dbID=DB_DatingViolenceResourceCenter101).
- **Wisconsin Council Against Sexual Assault** <http://www.wcasa.org>.
- **National Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative** <http://www.abanet.org/publiced/teendating.shtml>
- **The Aurora Center**, Program Against Sexual Violence. 612-626-9111 <http://www1.umn.edu/aurora/>
- **Teen Dating Violence** [http://www.womenslaw.org/laws\\_state\\_type.php?id=10434&state\\_code=GE](http://www.womenslaw.org/laws_state_type.php?id=10434&state_code=GE)

### Tips and Tools for Dating Violence

- **The Safe Place**  
Breaking the cycle of teen dating violence [www.thesafespace.org](http://www.thesafespace.org)
- **Know The Red Flags** is designed to help young adults form healthy relationships by learning to spot and deal with the warning signs of dating violence [www.knowtheredflags.com](http://www.knowtheredflags.com)
- **Break the Cycle** engages, educates, and empowers youth to build lives and communities free from domestic and dating violence. [www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org).
- **The Date Safe Project** is committed to being the nation's leading organization for teaching how "asking first" makes all the difference in creating safer intimacy and in decreasing occurrences of sexual assault. [www.thedatesafeproject.org](http://www.thedatesafeproject.org)
- **The GLBT National Youth Talkline** provides peer counseling via telephone and email for gay and questioning teens. [www.glnh.org/talkline](http://www.glnh.org/talkline)
- **See It and Stop It** addresses ways teens can work against dating abuse in their everyday actions. [www.seeitandstopit.org](http://www.seeitandstopit.org)