



Dating Abuse

Information Sheet

Dating can help you figure out what kind of people and activities you like and don't like, and what's important to you.

But sometimes dating can turn into something that doesn't feel good. Sometimes people abuse their dating partner, or are even violent.

Get Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

For help in your community or for more information, please call the 24-hour Family Violence Info Line toll-free at **310-1818** or visit www.familyviolence.alberta.ca.

Alberta Children and Youth Services is proud to lead Alberta's Prevention of Family Violence and Bullying Initiative.

What happens in a healthy dating relationship?

- You enjoy the time you spend together
- You respect each other's opinion
- You can disagree and know it's okay to talk about your differences
- You feel good doing things apart from each other as well as together
- There is no fear in your relationship
- You do not try to restrict or control each other
- It's easy to be true to yourself when you are with the other person. You encourage each other to be great

Being in a healthy dating relationship does not mean you always agree or that you are going to stay together for a long time. It just means you are respectful to each other while you are dating.

But not all dating relationships are healthy. Is it a big problem? Well, one study found that 29 per cent of girls and 13 per cent of guys between 11 and 20 years old had experienced some form of dating abuse that was upsetting to them.¹

What is abuse?

Abuse is about power. Abuse is about control. Abuse is about one person trying to control or dominate another. Here are some control tactics that might be used.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE TACTICS may include:

- **Treating you with disrespect**
 - Name-calling, insulting, blaming, humiliating
 - Interfering with or ridiculing your spiritual beliefs and practices
- **Emotional roller coaster**
 - Being explosive or having wild mood swings
 - Manipulating you emotionally, such as, "If you love me then you will do as I want"
- **Isolation**
 - Being possessive, not wanting you to be with other people
 - Trying to keep you away from your friends and family

¹ Price, E. L., Byers, E. S., Sears, H. A., Whelan, J., & Saint-Pierre, M. (2000, January). *Dating violence amongst New Brunswick adolescents: A summary of two studies*. In *Research Paper Series (2)*. Fredericton: The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick. Retrieved from <http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/documents/Dating-Violence.pdf>



SEXUAL ABUSE TACTICS may include:

- Pressure to have sex
- Unwanted sexual touching and/or unsafe sexual practices
- Making fun of you if you do not want to do certain sexual things
- Forcing a person into degrading, humiliating or painful sexual acts

INTIMIDATION TACTICS are actions meant to scare you. They may include:

- **Behaviours that could harm you or people or possessions you care about, such as:**
 - Throwing things or breaking things
 - Destroying your possessions
- **Threats**
 - Threatening to harm you, people or pets you care about
 - Threatening to spread rumours about you or get you in trouble
 - Threatening to commit suicide if you do not do something they want
 - Threatening gestures or facial expressions
- **Stalking or harassment tactics, such as:**
 - Following you
 - Parking close by and watching where you live or work
 - Contacting you by phone, Internet or text message more than you feel comfortable with
 - Contacting your friends or family to ask about you or spread false rumours about you

PHYSICAL ABUSE TACTICS may include:

- Shoving, slapping, kicking, biting, punching, pinching, hair pulling, pushing or elbowing you
- Throwing things at you
- Threatening to harm you with an object or weapon

Know the early warning signs:

Seven warning signs that you are dating a person who is abusive and could be violent.

1. Soon after you begin dating, your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you to make the relationship very serious or to have sex.
2. Your boyfriend or girlfriend becomes extremely jealous and possessive. He or she thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
3. Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to control you and to make all decisions about what you do together. Your boyfriend or girlfriend does not take your views or desires seriously.
4. Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to keep you from spending time with close friends or family.
5. Your boyfriend or girlfriend verbally and emotionally abuses you. He or she does things like yell at you, swear at you, manipulate you, spread false and degrading rumours about you, and try to make you feel guilty.
6. Your boyfriend or girlfriend threatens physical violence.
7. Your boyfriend or girlfriend has abused a previous girlfriend or boyfriend. He or she accepts and defends the use of violence by others.

These are only some of the possible signs of abuse. Trust your instincts and get help if you feel your partner is abusive.