



KATIE BROWN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Promotes Respectful Relationships by
Teaching Relationship Violence Prevention

What to Do if Your Teen is Being Abused

Be there:

Listen to your son or daughter. Let them know you care and that you will be there whether s/he stays in the relationship or leaves.

Acknowledge the abuse:

Let your child know that name-calling, put-downs, mind games, the silent treatment, telling someone what to wear or who to be with are forms of abuse just as much as pushing, shoving hitting and unwanted sexual touch. Ask your child things like: “Do you feel safe?” “Does the relationship help you feel good about yourself?”

Assess the danger:

Ask if your child’s boyfriend or girlfriend has access to a weapon, uses alcohol or drugs, has ever been violent with another person, has threatened to hurt themselves or others, or has unpredictable outbursts. If you are worried that your child or their girl/boyfriend’s life is in danger, seek assistance immediately.

Remind your child of her/his strengths:

Talk to your child about the things you like about her/him and the things s/he does well. Let your son or daughter know you have confidence in their ability to make good decisions.

Identify options and resources:

Find out about services and agencies that can help. Let your child know that there is help available. Help your child think about what s/he can do the next time s/he gets scared of the abuser.

Emphasize that the abuse is not your child's fault:

Tell your child that no matter what s/he has done, s/he is not to blame for the abuse. The only person responsible for the abuse is the person who is abusive. Help her/him recognize the abuser's excuses, which may include:

- S/he may blame alcohol. Tell your child that even though the abuser may have a drinking problem, alcohol does not cause him/her to be violent.
- The abuser may say s/he just loses control. Explain that abuse is not being out of control, it is controlling behavior.
- The abuser may blame your child for provoking the abuse. Help your child see that her/his words or actions do not justify violence or abuse.
- The abuser may have told your child that s/he wouldn't be violently possessive or jealous unless s/he loved him/her. Let your child know that jealousy and possessiveness do not equal love.

Respect your child's decision:

If your child decides to stay in the relationship, say things like: "I am worried that you are not safe. I know that you have to do what you think is best. I just want to let you know the things that scare me about you staying in the relationship."

Keep yourself safe:

Supporting a teen who is being abused can be very draining. Take care of yourself and get the support you need to be a parent. Be sure to keep yourself physically safe from the person abusing your child. If you or someone you know is currently involved in an abusive relationship, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline for information on how to get help in your community. Their telephone number is 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or 1-800-787-3224 TTY. If you are in immediate danger, please call 911 right away.