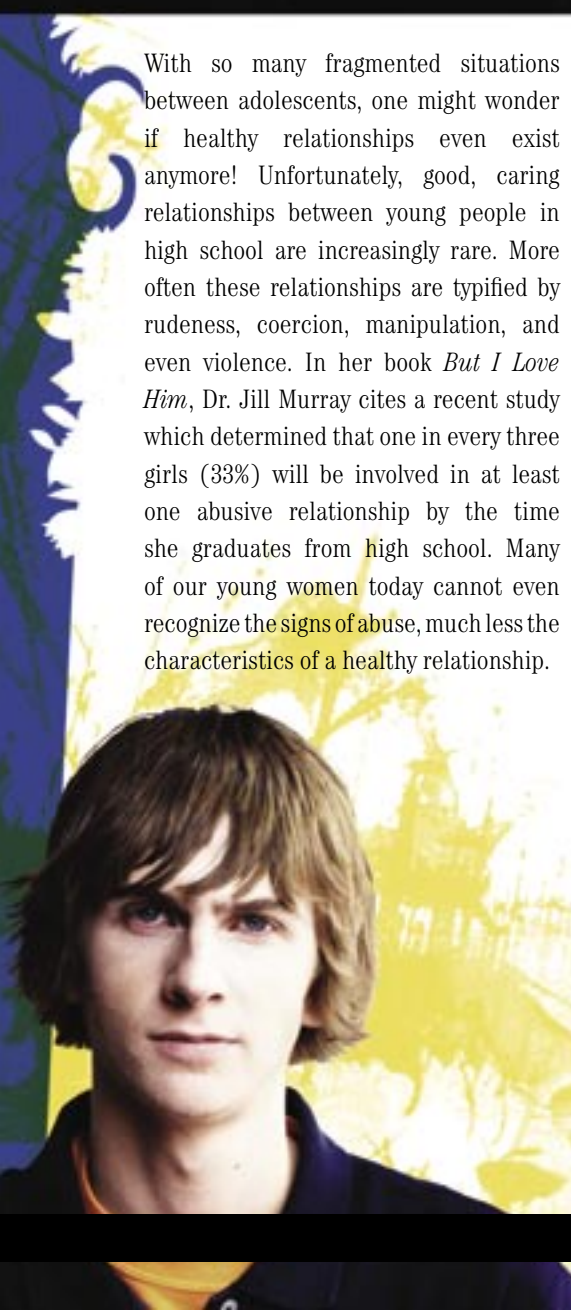


As a parent, you may not realize the alarming number of abusive dating relationships that exist.

DATING ABUSE



With so many fragmented situations between adolescents, one might wonder if healthy relationships even exist anymore! Unfortunately, good, caring relationships between young people in high school are increasingly rare. More often these relationships are typified by rudeness, coercion, manipulation, and even violence. In her book *But I Love Him*, Dr. Jill Murray cites a recent study which determined that one in every three girls (33%) will be involved in at least one abusive relationship by the time she graduates from high school. Many of our young women today cannot even recognize the signs of abuse, much less the characteristics of a healthy relationship.

Unhealthy Beginnings

How do these abusive relationships arise? In answer to this, we must realize that our society has built very different motivations and impossible roles for both young men and young women to achieve or fulfill. Sadly, girls are constantly bombarded by every form of media with a message that they have to be attractive, smart, funny, thin, sexy, and countless other qualities in order to attract men.

The message is loud and clear that the weight of any relationship is on their shoulders, and it is up to them to know how to keep their boyfriend happy. Article after article tells them how to dress, wear their hair, improve their makeup, lose weight and basically emulate the media's idea of the perfect woman. These messages start early in her life, even before puberty. In the world of today's girl, she faces extreme pressure in practically every area of her life. Her own gender is often her harshest critic. The desire to fit in and not to stand out too much may drive her to conformity.

Meanwhile, young men are saturated in an entertainment industry that soaks them daily in images both extremely sexual and highly violent. This interaction with media actually causes physical changes to the human brain. Studies have shown that exposure to media violence decreased activity in the frontal lobe of the brain, which is the part of the brain that deals with impulse control, attention span and emotions. Frontal lobe disruption has been proven numerous times in recent years to be associated with a variety of cognitive and mood disorders, including those that contribute to clinical depression.

RESOURCES:

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or
1-800-787-3224

National Hopeline Network
1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

National Runaway Hotline
1-800-621-4000 or
1-800-621-0394

Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN)
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

It's Not About Control. It's About Influence.

SIGNS OF VERBAL OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- ➔ Name calling
- ➔ Intimidating looks
- ➔ Frequent use of pagers/cell phones (*having to always get in touch with you*)
- ➔ Making person wait by the phone (*they may or may not ever call*)
- ➔ Using “bitch” as a “term of endearment”
- ➔ Monopolizing person’s time
- ➔ Isolating person from family and friends
- ➔ Making person feel insecure
- ➔ Blaming person for things
- ➔ Saying “I love you” too soon
- ➔ Manipulation—making person look pathetic
- ➔ Making threats
- ➔ Interrogating
- ➔ Public or private humiliation
- ➔ Breaking treasured items

Why do we mention these things? These observations help us understand how abusive relationships gain such a powerful hold over people’s minds and hearts. Abuse situations are strengthened by the fact that girls are depressed because of the way they look, while boys are desensitized to violence through the bombardment of violent images in media. For some girls, just the fact that someone is paying attention to them entraps them in an abusive relationship. They are so grateful for the attention that they don’t stop and ask themselves critical questions about the other person’s character and

reputation. Meanwhile, guys can tend to manipulate these young women in search for a quick physical pleasure, with little regard for her feelings.

As a consequence, we find a rise in abusive relationships. Abuse can happen to both sexes; however, the majority of abusive situations are male to female. If we can

understand that the ultimate goal of the abuser is to control the relationship in every way, it helps strip away the mystery of why they act the way they act. But healthy relationships are not about power or control—they are about mutual respect and allowing (even more, *encouraging*) the other person to be free and to pursue their goals, ambitions, and life experiences.

FORMS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Boys use their hands when physically abusing a girl: (examples)

- ➔ Hitting
- ➔ Choking
- ➔ Pushing
- ➔ Shoving
- ➔ Restraining behaviors
- ➔ Roughhousing/Play wrestling

Girls use weapons when physically abusing a boy: (examples)

- ➔ Acrylic fingernails
- ➔ Thrown objects
- ➔ Knives
- ➔ Baseball bats
- ➔ Golf clubs

For more information, visit www.therealmajority.com