Understanding the Connections: Relationship Abuse & Teen Sexual Health

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Introductions:
What is your role in supporting teen’s sexual health?
How much sex ed do you do within your curriculum?
Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- identify at least two examples of the sexual health impacts of relationship abuse in young people.
- identify how preventing relationship abuse is also a strategy for promoting better sexual health.
- gain understanding of the real lived experiences of youth who are experiencing relationship abuse.
- identify the ways DV advocates and family planning providers can be a resource for partnering to prevent the health outcomes of abuse.

Domestic abuse is...

Pattern of controlling behavior

(NOT isolated incidents of physical violence)

In the context of a current or former relationship

Purposeful and chosen

(NOT out of control)

A belief system that the abuser has the right to limit the human and civil rights of their victim
“Teen Dating Violence” - What’s In a Name?

Impact of Abuse on Young People

- Each year, 1 in 15 children live in homes in which one of the parents (or the parent’s partner) abuses the other adult. 90% of these children are eyewitnesses to the violence. (Hamby, Finkelhor, et al. 2011)

- 1 in 3 (31%) children who witnessed intimate partner violence reported being physically abused themselves. Of those children who did not witness intimate partner violence, only 4.8% reported physical abuse. (Hamby, S, Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., & Ormrod, R. 2010)

- 18.7% of Maine middle schoolers report that violence in their home, or the threat of violence, has caused them to have to leave home, even if only temporarily. (MIYHS 2015)

- All children who live with intimate partner violence are affected differently and not all are traumatized. (Futures Without Violence)
Teen Dating Violence by the Numbers

- Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year. (loveisrespect.org)
- 8.5% of Maine high schoolers who are dating report that in the preceding year, someone they were dating or going out with physically hurt them on purpose at least once. The percentage was higher for gay/lesbian students (16.3%) and bisexual students (16.4%) than for heterosexual students (7%). (MIYHS 2015)
- 81 percent of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don’t know if it’s an issue. (loveisrespect.org)

Impacts on Teen Sexual Health
What is Reproductive Coercion?

- Reproductive and sexual coercion involves behavior intended to maintain power and control in a relationship related to reproductive health by someone who is, was, or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent. (definition from ACOG)

What does it look like in a relationship?
Are young people engaging in sexual acts?

At what age are the young people in your lives starting to engage in sexual acts and/or sexual intercourse?

What are your reactions when they tell you they are?

Red Flags

- Unintended Pregnancies
  - Adolescent girls in physically abusive relationships were 3.5 times more likely to become pregnant than non-abused girls.

(Futures without Violence)
Emergency Contraception

- Abused women are more likely to have used emergency contraception when compared to non-abused women.

(Futures without Violence)

Sexually Transmitted Infections

- Women with high STI knowledge who were fearful of abuse were less likely to consistently use condoms than nonfearful women with low STI knowledge.

(Futures without Violence)
Finding Resiliency in Reproductive Health Care

- Birth Control
- PrEP
- Sexuality Transmitted Infections Testing

Please just know that you all had a huge impact on me and my ability to take back control of my reproductive health. That is no small feat. One of the first steps to healing from my trauma was booking that initial appointment. You all have helped me move forward with my life with that single appointment.

- Mabel Client
Nurturing healthy relationship behaviors in young people is one way to address these sexual and reproductive health impacts.

Think about the young people in your life... How would you describe their dating relationships?

- Intense
- Short-lived
- Progresses quickly
- Lacking in depth
- Dramatic
- Obsessive
- Possessive
What are your biggest concerns and fears about young people and their relationships?

“But do young people even date anymore?”

Young adults may not refer to it as ‘dating,’ and it may look a little different than an adult relationship, but young people are certainly engaging in – or wanting to engage in – intimate relationships with one another.
What is the language that young people use to describe their dating relationships?

“hooking up”
“hanging out”
“just talking”
“a fling”
“a thing”
“friends with benefits”
“we ‘like like’ each other”
“Netflix & Chill”
“boyfriend” “girlfriend”
Because we are together, . . .

I commit to . . .

- Honesty
- Faithfulness
- Sharing
- Companionship
- Kindness
- Listen and seek to understand
- Respect your boundaries
- Atone for any harm done w/out expectations for you

I am entitled to . . .

- Know everything you do
- Be the sole focus of your attention and affection
- Your obedience
- Your gratitude & forgiveness
- Your agreement
- Whatever I want to do “in my own house”
- Payback for my rules being broken

Don’t forget the 3 B’s

1. Belief Systems
2. Behaviors
3. Boundaries
How can advocates, educators, health providers, and youth professionals work together to address these issues?

MCEDV DVRC Services

- 24-hour toll-free helplines
- One-on-one support & advocacy
- Support groups
- Emergency sheltering options
- Transitional housing services
- Legal advocacy & representation or referrals
- Community and school-based education
- Information and access to public assistance
- Children’s programs
- Professional training
- Collaborative initiatives
Services

- Abortion Care
  - Abortion by pill
  - In clinic procedure
- Annual Wellness Exams
- Birth Control
  - Emergency Contraception
- Cancer Screenings
- Colposcopy
- Infertility Consultation
- Intrauterine Insemination
- LGBTQ Healthcare
- Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy
- Men’s Health
- Pregnancy Testing and Options
- Prenatal Care
- Sexually Transmitted Infections Testing and Treatment
- Vaginal Infection Testing and Treatment
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