

## What you should do if...

### you are being abused—

- ◆ Talk to someone you trust: your parents, a guidance counselor or teacher, or another trusted adult.
- ◆ In an emergency, contact the police or the sheriff's office. The Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley Hotline can also help. Their number is 1-800-788-1123(V/TTY)
- ◆ Get out of the relationship...it will only get worse.

### you are abusing someone—

- ◆ Realize that admitting there is a problem is the first step to getting help. You will never be happy in an abusive relationship.
- ◆ Talk to someone you trust about getting help.

### a friend is being abused—

- ◆ Listen to your friend, believe him or her, and let the person know that you care.
- ◆ Give the person this brochure and encourage him or her to get some help.
- ◆ Don't judge or criticize.
- ◆ Help your friend to understand that he or she is a good person and not to blame for the problems in the relationship.
- ◆ Remind your friend that dating violence won't get better by itself.

## Can you relate to...

**Sarah?** My boyfriend Jason is really crazy about me. I mean, he just hates it when I talk to other guys. I tell him they're just my friends, but Jason says they're all after me. One time we got into a fight because he saw me sitting with another guy in the dining hall. I tried to tell Jason we were just studying for a math test, but he said I was lying and slapped me. I guess he just gets jealous because he loves me so much.

**David?** Amy and I started going steady about a month ago. She's really great looking and I like her a lot, but I don't feel like I can trust her. Last weekend I told her the reason I couldn't have friends over is because my mom drinks too much. She told her best friend Heather and now half the school knows. She said it isn't any big deal, and if I don't like it I can find another girlfriend. I don't want anyone else. I just wish I could trust Amy.

**Jane?** My dad expects my mom to be there when he gets home from work. The other night she was so tired from working overtime that she came home and went straight to bed. Dad followed her screaming that he's sick of her not doing what she's supposed to. Then he beat her up and stormed out of the house. The next morning he apologized and promised that it wouldn't happen again. But it always does. I guess that's just the way he is.



*This material originally produced by  
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permission.*

# Dating<sup>and</sup> Violence

## when the fun stops

### Virginia Tech Women's Center

540-231-7806

womenscenter.vt.edu

### Virginia Tech Police

(non-emergency)

540-231-6441

### Schiffert Health Center

McComas Hall (0140)  
895 Washington Street, SW  
Blacksburg, VA 24061  
(540) 231-6444

 **VirginiaTech**<sup>®</sup>  
Division of Student Affairs

## Has your boyfriend or girlfriend ever...

- ◆ pushed or shoved you?
- ◆ told you not to talk to anyone else?
- ◆ made you do something you didn't want to do?
- ◆ slapped you or twisted your arm?
- ◆ threatened you?
- ◆ become "crazy" with jealousy?
- ◆ insulted you or humiliated you in front of your friends?
- ◆ kept you from seeing your friends?
- ◆ forced you into sexual activity you didn't want?

## Do you ever...

- ◆ feel depressed?
- ◆ believe no one else would want to date you?
- ◆ no longer spend much time with your own friends?
- ◆ hesitate to express your own opinions?
- ◆ fear doing or saying the "wrong" thing?

**If you answered YES to any of these questions you could be in an abusive relationship.**

## Symptoms of abuse in a dating relationship:

In this section male pronouns *he, him and his* are used to refer to the abuser; the female pronouns *she and her* are used to refer to the abuser's partner. Although females are more frequently the victims of physical abuse, both males and females can be, and are, victims and abusers.

**Need to control** Everything the abuser does is part of an effort to control his partner by intimidating her into acting the way he wants her to. The abuser will try to control every aspect of his partner's life...where they go on dates, what clothes she can wear, in what school activities she can participate, to whom she can talk...until she feels she is no longer in control of her own life.

**Jealousy** Often mistaken for "love," jealousy is actually a sign of insecurity. The abuser will use his jealousy as an excuse for violent behavior and as a justification for controlling his partner's behavior in order to isolate her from her friends.

**Isolating Behavior** An abuser may try to isolate his partner to increase her dependency on him. This behavior may seem natural at first, but the couple will gradually spend less and less time at parties and activities with other people. The abuser will expect his girlfriend not to talk to other guys and may insist that her female friends dislike him and their relationship and that she must stop hanging around with them, too. At this point she is completely isolated from friends who could help her if he becomes physically abusive.

**Threats** An abuser will make threats (and sometimes carry them out) in order to control his partner's behavior. The threat may be to hurt her, to injure a pet, to reveal a

secret she has shared with him, to break up with her or even to kill himself if she doesn't do what he wants.

**Insults** Abusers often insult and criticize their partners, humiliating them in front of their friends as well as in private. Abusive insults are not "just kidding." They are meant to hurt cruelly and they do.

**Sexual Pressure** Forcing someone to go further than they want to is abusive. Rape is the most extreme form of sexual abuse, but coercing your partner into any sexual activity when she doesn't want to is also abuse.

**Physical Violence** At first, this type of physical abuse may be relatively "mild"... he may give her a shove or grab her arm too hard. Over time, the violence will escalate and the abuser may hit his partner hard enough to break her nose or blacken her eye. The danger from a violent abusive relationship should not be underestimated.

