WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE
What is dating violence?

It's when one partner abuses the other in a dating relationship. Abuse includes any words or actions meant to control or hurt another person.

Dating violence is very common.

Characters are: someone you know has been the victim of dating violence.

It happens mainly to women.

Men sometimes experience violence in a relationship, but women are more likely to be the victims.

Dating violence can have serious effects.

These may include:

- physical injuries, such as bruises and broken bones
- emotional problems, such as low self-esteem
- death.

Victims may come to view abuse as a normal part of relationships. But, abuse is never normal.
Dating can play a positive role in your life.
Building a good relationship isn’t easy, but it’s worth the effort!

In a healthy relationship, you and your partner:
- feel good about each other and the relationship
- treat one another with respect and courtesy
- communicate clearly and let one another know what each of you really thinks
- feel free to question each other and explore problems
- accept that even healthy relationships don’t always work out.

But, when dating involves abuse, there’s no chance for a healthy relationship to develop.

Good dating experiences can help you:
- learn about yourself, including who you are and who you want to be
- learn about others and the qualities you admire in other people
Dating violence can take many forms.
And in many cases, it's illegal.

**Emotional abuse**
can harm a person’s self-esteem.
Examples include:
- repeated lies and broken promises
- withholding affection -- giving the silent treatment
- extreme jealousy that keeps a partner away from family, friends or interests
- insults and put-downs
- threats
- controlling a person’s every move -- how to dress, what to eat, where to go, etc.

**Physical abuse**
causes physical pain or injury.
Examples include:
- punching, kicking, shaking, slapping or restraining someone
- attacking with a weapon
- tickling or hugging, if it’s unwanted.

**Sexual abuse**
is any kind of unwanted sexual advance or contact. It can include everything from unwelcome sexual comments to kissing to intercourse.
Forced sex between two people who know each other is called acquaintance rape or date rape. It is a common and serious problem, and it’s illegal.
More facts about dating violence

Abuse is never the victim's fault.
Abusers often blame the other person for "causing" the abuse. But, it's the abuser who needs to change his or her behavior.

Abuse often follows a pattern.
Abusers often regret their actions and apologize. But, before long, they abuse again. Abuse usually gets worse rather than better.

If you are being abused, don't think that apologies, promises, or kind treatment following abuse means it won't happen again.

You always have the right to say no to sex.
This is true even if you've agreed to sex before. You don't owe your date sex or anything else just because you went out with him or her or did something special that evening.

You deserve a healthy relationship.
Some people feel that an unhealthy relationship is better than none at all, but it's not. In fact, it can be very dangerous.

The abuser doesn't deserve another chance – you do!
You can reduce the risk of dating violence.

Communicate clearly, and let your partner know you will not tolerate any abuse. Also discuss safety boundaries before a situation arises.

Avoid isolated places, especially until you get to know the other person. Stay away from places where you’ll be alone.

Stay in control of what is happening to you. Don’t use alcohol or other drugs. Have your own way home in case you need it. Always carry change for a pay phone.

Trust your instincts if you have concerns about a potential date. Get to know the person before going out, or go out with a group.

Be choosy—think twice about dating people who:
- put down others often
- use alcohol or other drugs
- want to be in control of everything
- have angry outbursts or are extremely jealous
- use physical force
- drive recklessly or drink and drive.
You can end an unhealthy relationship.

Believe in yourself.
Stand by your feelings. If you feel you were abused, talk to someone you can trust.

Get help.
- If you've been physically harmed, get medical attention.
- If you fear you are in danger, seek shelter and call the police or sheriff's department.
- Talk with a friend, crisis hotline, mental health center or member of the clergy.
- Consider counseling, even if the abuse happened long ago.

Get out.
Abusive relationships usually get worse, not better. Make sure you're safe and resist the temptation to give the person one more chance.

If you know a victim of dating violence:
- Believe and support the person.
- Encourage him or her to get help and get out of the relationship.

You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at:
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

You deserve the benefits of a happy, healthy relationship!