



# Adolescent Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) or 'Dating Violence' is one of the major sources of violence in teen life. Although the majority of IPV victims are female, young men may also be victims of abusive girlfriends who use emotional and verbal abuse to control and intimidate. Young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) experience intimate partner violence at similar rates as those who identify as heterosexual. Young women face substantially higher risk of experiencing IPV than older women and are more likely to experience IPV during pregnancy than older women.

## How does it look?

The nature of IPV is that it can start in small ways which can often be perceived as 'caring'. For teenagers, having their initial experiences of intimate relationships, it can be very confusing to determine the difference between 'caring' and 'controlling' behaviours in a relationship and what is and isn't ok. The nature of young intimate partner relationships has shifted significantly, as 'online' relationships and the emergence of the new technologies play a key role in not only 'dating' but also the types of coercion and control within young people's intimate relationships. Controlling and coercive behaviour can be criticising the way their partner looks, dresses or things they say; checking their text messages and emails to see who they speak to; making threats to share intimate details or nude photos.

In addition, abusive partners within an LGBTIQ relationship may use homo/bi/transphobia to exercise power and control over a partner. For example, they may threaten to 'out' or disclose their partners sexuality to their friends, family or peers.

Abusive partners use all sorts of ways to control the person they are in a relationship with and no experience of violence is the same. If it makes the person feel frightened, intimidated or diminished, it's wrong!

## What can you do to support a young person experiencing IPV?

Many teenagers don't tell their parents about an abusive relationship because they are confused about what constitutes abuse, they don't want to lose their freedom, and they may fear they cannot get another boy/girlfriend.

If a young person is unsure if their relationship is abusive, the following questions may help. Does your partner:

- *Prevent you from hanging out with friends and family?*
- *Check up on you, make you check in with them, go through your purse?*
- *Act extremely jealous or possessive, want to know where you've been and who you've been with, accuse you of cheating on them?*
- *Use aggressive behaviour in other areas of their life (punches holes in walls, gets into fights)?*
- *Hit, kick, push, shove, punch, slap, hold you down, treat you roughly?*

- *Blame you for bringing out the worst in them, convince you it's all your fault, blame you for how they feel or act?*
- *Make you feel you can't do anything right, and no one else would want you?*
- *tell you how to dress or how much makeup to wear,*
- *Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends?*
- *Use drugs or alcohol excessively?*
- *Use intimidation or threats to get their way?*
- *Threaten to hurt you or somebody you care about?*
- *Pressure you into having sex or going further than you want to?*
- *Threaten suicide if you break up?*
- *Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere to teach you a lesson?*
- *Act romantic after each violent argument and promise never to hurt you again?*

If a young person is unsure if their relationship is abusive, the best advice is to tell them that how they feel in a relationship is the best gauge if it's good or not. Having a good relationship doesn't mean you have to have sex and sex should be something that makes you both feel good.

Adolescence and early adulthood is an important period in laying the foundations of health and stable relationships, and women's health and well-being over all. Ensuring that adolescents enjoy relationships free of violence is an important investment in their future.

## **Sexting and the Law**

Under Australian law it is illegal to use your phone or internet to take, keep, look at, send or ask someone to send sexual images or videos of anyone who is under the age of **18 years** (or anyone who looks under the age of 18yrs). This law applies even if the photo or video is of you or if the person in the photo or video said it was OK. Sexting with someone under 18 can be considered child pornography.

In addition, in Western Australia, it is against the law for intimate images or video's to be shared of anyone under the **age of 16** or without the consent of the person in it. An intimate image or video can be someone naked, in their underwear or a person doing anything private like using the toilet or showering.

If a young person receives a sext from someone, advise them to delete it and **DO NOT** forward it onto others.

If a young person has had a sexual image or video of themselves shared online by another person, they can contact the Police and/or report the image so it can be taken down (for information on how to do this visit the [esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au) website).

## **Helping a Young Person Stay Safe**

The biggest warning sign that a person may be violent in the future is their past violent behaviour and an increase in controlling or possessive behaviour. You can help a young person stay safe by suggesting some of the following:

- Tell friends, family (Mum / Dad / siblings), counsellor, or teachers who you can trust what's going on. Tell them that if you feel scared, you may need to call them. Set up a 'safety' code word for if you do need to call them;



- Stay aware – try not to drink or use other drugs;
- Try not to meet the person on your own;
- If you're out, make sure you have your own (safe) way of getting home;
- If you have been harassed, stalked, threatened or sexually assaulted, you can apply for a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO) by contacting the Youth Legal Service or Domestic Violence Legal Unit;
- Call the Police (000) if you are in immediate danger.

See the *Safety Plan Information Sheet* located in the [FDV Toolbox](#) for more information on staying safe.

## Helpful Websites

[The Line](#): relationships discussion and advice and telephone counselling – 1800 200 526 (24/7)

[Love, The Good, the Bad and the Ugly](#): website for young people on dating, sex, relationships and abuse

[esafety.com.au](#): information on image-based abuse, how to take action, advice etc

[Another Closet](#): website with information for LGBTIQ young people experiencing IPV including information, personal stories, staying safe & support services.

[Headspace](#): information to support a young person on many different topics including relationships, sex, gender and bullying.

### References:

Branson, B, *Teens and Dating Violence, Focus on the Family Australia*, accessed 16/9/2019, <https://www.families.org.au/article/teens-and-dating-violence>

Compo, M, Tayton, S, *Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer communities*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015.

Campo, M, *Domestic and family violence in pregnancy and early parenthood: overview and emerging interventions*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Child Family Community Australia, 2015.

Get The Facts, WA Health, accessed 16/9/2019, <https://www.getthefacts.health.wa.gov.au/keeping-safe/sexting>

**For a list of FDV support services a young person can access, go to the *FDV Support Services Guide* in the [FDV Toolbox](#).**

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

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