



# Appealing to Teens to Participate in Healthy Marriage/ Relationship Education

**How To Guide**

April 2009

# Appealing to Teens to Participate in Healthy Marriage/Relationship Education

## Background

Divorce rates have more than doubled during the last half of the 20th century. They reached a peak in the 1980s and have lowered only slightly since. Over the same period, rates of cohabitation (i.e., unmarried couples sharing a household) have greatly increased. At the same time, the average age at which people are getting married has risen too. These trends are especially pronounced in low-income populations.<sup>1</sup> Despite these changes, the significant benefits of a healthy marriage to individuals and society remain unchanged and are documented by years of research.<sup>2</sup>

More than 80% of teens have experienced their first romantic relationship by age 18.

More than 80% of teens have experienced their first romantic relationship by age 18.<sup>3</sup> The experiences in these relationships can have potentially life-altering consequences for adolescents' emotional health (like depression and self esteem) and social and academic competence.<sup>4</sup> In addition, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases/infections (STDs/STIs) and risk of pregnancy can occur. Teen relationships also provide the primary backdrop for intimate partner violence, decisions about if and when to engage in sexual behavior, and contraceptive use.<sup>5</sup> The consequences may be even more significant within low-income populations, where rates of STDs/STIs, intimate partner violence, and teen pregnancy are even higher than in middle class populations.

In light of these findings, it is believed that teens

would benefit greatly from healthy marriage and relationship education (MRE). A survey conducted on behalf of The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that in a nationally representative sample of young people aged 12-17, seven out of ten teens say that most of their friends are in romantic relationships.<sup>6</sup> According to a report released by Rutgers University on behalf of the National Marriage Project, high school students who participate in relationship education are more likely than those who don't to describe improved communications with parents, increased use of reasoning tactics in conflict situations and more favorable attitudes toward premarital preparation and marriage counseling.<sup>7</sup> In addition, those who participated were less likely to use verbally aggressive tactics in resolving conflict and less likely to see cohabitation as a likely course for them before marriage.<sup>8</sup>

This guide provides practical strategies to help you recruit teens into your MRE services. Consider the following four tips:

- Know and be able to explain why teen marriage/relationship education matters
- Choose a setting and/or partnership



- Market your message
- Consider all your recruitment options

## How to Appeal to Teens

### Explain Why Marriage/Relationship Education Matters for Teens

Relationship education guides adolescents in their problem-solving and communication skills. These skills are important for teenagers to understand so that they can form healthy relationships and make good decisions. Mastering these techniques will allow for better business and family interactions as teens grow into young adults and ultimately, start families of their own.

#### **Individual Development:**

Learning these skills encourages teens to discover things about themselves as individuals. This enables them to make more informed choices about what their values and goals are. Such introspection is helpful in a teen's transition to young adulthood.

**Teen Motivation:** Adolescents value romantic relationships highly and seek them out for themselves on average. Even young children are aware of and are generally preoccupied with romantic issues.<sup>9</sup> Across ethnic, racial, and gender categories, most adolescents view marriage as an important and desirable goal, and most expect to get married themselves. Males endorse marriage more strongly than females, and among males, Hispanics endorse marriage more strongly than whites, who endorse it more strongly than blacks.<sup>10</sup>

**Teen Sexual Behaviors/Risks:** Experiencing a romantic relationship within the past 18 months is one of the most powerful predictors of sexual activity among adolescents.<sup>11</sup> Unsafe teen sexual activity can result in STD/STIs. In fact, nineteen (19) million new STD infections occur each year, almost half of

them among those ages 15 to 24.<sup>12</sup>

The majority of teens believe that communication with their parents about love, sex and relationships should start when kids are about 13 or 14. In addition, teens indicate that it would be easier for them to delay sex and avoid pregnancy if they were able to have more open, honest conversations about these topics with their parents.<sup>13</sup> Teens who participate in relationship education can apply the communication skills they learn to discussions with their parents; examples and homework from these classes are also the perfect tools to facilitate these discussions.

Females ages 16 to 24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other age group—at a rate almost triple the national average.

**Teen Dating Violence:** Females ages 16 to 24 are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence than any other age group—at a rate almost triple the national average.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 1 in 5 female high school students report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner.<sup>15</sup> Because of these alarmingly high rates of vulnerability within female teens, it is essential for them to understand what a healthy relationship looks like so they may recognize warning signs and protect themselves. This includes being familiar with mental, physical and sexual abuse.

*For more information/handouts on teen dating violence, please see Appendix A.*

*For a sample Dating Violence Protocol for Educators, please see Appendix B.*

## Choose a Setting and Partnership

Select a setting and partnership(s). The two decisions are often interrelated. Once you establish contact, develop the relationships and stay connected. Consider drafting a strategic plan around your mutual settings, goals, and programs.

*For a list of Questions to Consider When Selecting Settings and Partnerships, please see Appendix C.*

Possible Settings		
Healthcare	Community	School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare facilities, extensions, and hospitals</li> <li>• Teen pregnancy prevention centers</li> <li>• Local counseling and mental health agencies and clinics</li> <li>• Programs for pregnant and parenting teens</li> <li>• Pediatric clinics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious institutions</li> <li>• YMCAs/YWCAs</li> <li>• Camps or retreats</li> <li>• Summer programs</li> <li>• Juvenile justice system, juvenile detention centers</li> <li>• Local counseling and mental health agencies and clinics</li> <li>• Foster care programs</li> <li>• Group homes</li> <li>• Daycare</li> <li>• Independent living facilities</li> <li>• Ropes courses</li> <li>• Charm schools</li> <li>• Boys and Girls Clubs</li> <li>• Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts</li> <li>• Boys town</li> <li>• Rotary Club</li> <li>• Kiwanis Club</li> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Fraternities and sororities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-school (FACS/health/psy)</li> <li>• After-school programs</li> <li>• Pre-prom workshops,</li> <li>• Student government</li> <li>• Student clubs</li> </ul>

Experts in the field strongly suggest partnering with **schools, religious institutions** (especially those looking for programming for kids after 8th grade), and **community centers** (particularly those serving more at-risk youth).<sup>16</sup> It is important to note these facilities may have curriculum requirements.

For a list of Marriage/Relationship Education programs, please see Appendix D.

## Market Your Message

Marketing promotes your mission and services. Remember that people usually need to see information multiple times before they really absorb it. You should plan to market your program consistently in multiple places over time. Also, keep track of where participants hear about your program and what caught their attention so that you can identify which parts of your strategy are more successful and adjust accordingly. Lastly, remember that word of mouth is an invaluable marketing tool.

To advertise or increase interest in your services, consider using online services, like *MySpace*, *Facebook* or *Twitter*.

**Social Networking Sites:** To advertise or increase interest in your services, consider using online services, like *MySpace*, *Facebook* or *Twitter*. For online marketing, the key to addressing teens is to talk with them, not to them. Often times, adults attempt to scare teens into things by using statistics. It is important to remember that this age groups believes themselves to be immortal so establishing rapport is much more effective.

Create a MySpace account for your program. You can easily create a page that can be accessed by anyone who searches *MySpace* by name or a related topic (such as relationships, love, health, teens, youth, or sex education). To promote your page, learn what other pages exist. Then, you can request to “add to friends” any person or organization with a MySpace account to raise awareness and interest in your page. Over time, your network of “friends” will grow as more people access your site through either the search function or mutual friends’ pages. This provides a great opportunity to spread the word and

make your services known. For more information, search the web for *how to set up a MySpace account*. *Facebook* operates similarly to *MySpace*.

*Twitter* is a service that allows you to send out “mini-blogs” to those people “following” you on this service. You can send out one to two line facts about relationships. You could use this to inform teens and generate interest in MRE classes.

Other prime methods for reaching teens are: instant messaging, email marketing, viral marketing, advertising, streaming audio, file sharing, and non-intrusive rich media.<sup>17</sup>

### **Traditional Marketing Venues:**

Other ways to market the message include advertising on your community partners’ websites and newsletters, in community and school newsletters and within religious organizations. There are many avenues available to advertise including but not limited to flyers and brochures, newspapers, TV, and radio.

People sometimes need to see information about a program or service multiple times before they decide to explore it further. Make sure that you use as many different marketing strategies as possible.

Use visuals that attract youth; it helps to feature pictures of young people. Make sure you have signed release forms from their parents!

**Tailor Your Message:** One way to get some ideas about effective messages for your population is to ask teens themselves. Get in touch with some teens who have already been through your program, find out what they liked most about the program, what interested them about it in the first place and where they heard about your program. In fact, if the teen is really enthusiastic about his or her experience, you can even incorporate his or her quote into testimonials in your marketing materials. Focus groups are a good way to get feedback from teens!

## Recruit Teens to Your Program

Recruitment is specific to getting participants in the program.

### Schools:

Teachers in the school setting are the most sustainable approach and most practitioners find greater success going directly to teachers.<sup>18</sup> Propose to present at their local in-services, summits, and state conferences. However, feel free to ask administrators to let you do a training for teachers too. Present at the next PTA (to convince parents) or school board meeting.<sup>19</sup> Try approaching teachers individually. On your school's website, look up the teachers of Health and/or Family and Consumer Science classes. Meet with the principal. Talk to school counselors, who will know which students have the greatest need. Always prepare remarks and handouts.

Teachers in the school setting are the most sustainable approach and most practitioners find greater success going directly to teachers.

Check your state's curricular frameworks and find out which discipline covers these materials (i.e., family and consumer science/health/psychology).<sup>20</sup> For instance, family and Consumer Science classes, or FACS classes already teach courses on child development, family, relationships, and sexuality (see webcast information on FACS partnerships in Additional Resources). Health classes are mandatory and universal. Promote healthy relationship education as an important context for making good sexual choices. If teens know how to handle crushes, attractions, and understand the differences between healthy and abusive relationships, they will make better sexual decisions. Also, healthy relationships are an integral part of the wellness agenda; they encompass physi-

cal, mental and emotional health.<sup>21</sup>

Many students are looking for volunteer hours to fulfill service requirements—ask teachers if attending an MRE program can fulfill this requirement. Explain that it will be a service not only to them, but to their future relationships, friendships, co-workers, and families. Cite research on the impact of social-emotional intelligence and relationship smarts on life satisfaction and success. (See additional resources)

Ask teachers to award extra credit to students 1) who participate in any form of MRE outside of class, whether a luncheon, after-school program, or night class, and 2) who discuss these the skills with their siblings, friends, neighbors, or families.

Depending on the reach of your group, contact the state, district or high school person in charge of the appropriate discipline. Let them know how you can

help them reach their goals because you are familiar with best practices, the research base informing relationship education, and evaluated materials.<sup>22</sup>

Send flyers to parents publicizing who you are, what you do, and why

these programs should be included in their child's education. Provide remarks or handouts or schedule a brief assembly at parent-teacher conferences.

Encourage MRE graduates to be mentors to the next class and to recruit their friends and siblings into classes. Word of mouth is a great way to recruit. If students enjoy the material, consider starting a club and giving it a creative name. Recruit an adult club advisor (they are normally teachers in the school), such as a FACS/health/psych teacher. Host a lunch series of teen MRE, either by the club or by your organization. Sponsoring an outing is always popular with teenagers as is getting a t-shirt (designing t-shirts at your meeting is a great time, too).

To see a sample handout, “10 Things Teens Should Know About Marriage”, please see Appendix E.

### After-school programs:

Research suggests that MRE is well-received in after-school programs if you can demonstrate the following:

**Your curriculum has low resource demands (for example, it does not require staff to have much education or training with the service).**<sup>23</sup> You might try a curriculum/program that can be taught without training.

Do your homework on the curriculum you use. Talk to the curriculum developer. Get in touch with others who use it. Find out what students like and why.

**Students like the curriculum.** Do your homework on the curriculum you use. Talk to the curriculum developer. Get in touch with others who use it. Find out what students like and why. Read journal articles, publications, or fact sheets about your curriculum’s successes and be prepared to talk about them.

**Show that the program can improve program attendance, behavioral problems, or staff-student relationships.**<sup>24</sup> Again, what are the benefits or outcomes of your program? What does it aim to do? How does that relate to improving relationships or reducing behavioral problems? For instance, in MRE you teach communication skills, anger management, conflict resolution, and so forth. All of these skills are transferable to staff-student relationships.

### Programs serving disadvantaged youth:

The message that MRE will “build assets” has been extremely successful. Possessing knowledge, insights and skills to build healthy relationships is an asset of the highest order. Troubled, bad relationships

often accompanied by poor sexual choices have the capacity to undo and set back the progress young people make.<sup>25</sup>

### Youth programs:

Explain that possessing “love smarts” is important. Just as youth need school smarts and job smarts today, they need “love smarts” to make sound and healthy relationship choices to get where they want to be in ten or fifteen years.<sup>26</sup>

### Teen parenting programs:

The research is clear. When parents are in troubled, unstable, and destructive relationships, there is a significant impact on child well-being and parenting. Teen parents need tools to learn how to leave safely if it is dangerous, how

to assess their relationships, and how to identify what needs to change or improve to go forward with their current partners.<sup>27</sup>

### Foster youth:

MRE can provide information and skills to build, prepare for and live for what they want most- a family.<sup>28</sup> It is also extremely important for this population to understand what a healthy relationship looks like as most foster youth have been removed from biological families that are dysfunctional.

### Religious institutions:

Make the case to the youth services coordinator; be sure to relay that this venue will inform both parents and youth. Ask him or her to publicize your services and endorse teen MRE. Host an information session in the religious institution for free. Send flyers and informational handouts home and post them in the building.

## Adult marriage education programs:

Partner with adult marriage education services in your community. Schedule a 5-10 minute informational message about teen MRE before a class to raise interest and awareness. Hold it at the end of their series/class/training, so they can advocate the merits of MRE from personal experience. Solicit suggestions on how to recruit teens and share these services. Ask them to discuss youth MRE with their neighbors, friends, and co-workers.

## Health clinics and health-related organizations:

Know your state's health guidelines for middle-schoolers and high-schoolers and use these guidelines as an opportunity to offer MRE. For instance, all students entering 7th grade in the state of Nebraska are required to have a general health physical. Practitioners can take advantage of this time to talk to both youth and their parents about MRE.

You can also recruit teens directly into programs. Consider recruiting the student body president or student government as MRE spokespeople, campaigners, and/or advocates. Hold a "lunch and learn" and offer curricular excerpts. Invite the teens to create a campaign using their student newspaper, and radio/TV/announcement programs.

## Conclusion

More than 80% of teens have experienced their first romantic relationship before the age of 18. Thus, it is essential that teens are given a solid foundation of knowledge regarding healthy relationships. There are several ways in which to appeal to teens to participate in marriage education programs, including establishing strategic community partnerships, utilizing marketing venues and materials that attract teens, and recruiting teens through schools, youth programs and teen-led campaigns.

## Additional Resources

**Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs.** [http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/2007/RAND\\_TR488.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2007/RAND_TR488.sum.pdf)

**Making a Love Connection: Teen Relationships, Pregnancy and Marriage.** [http://www.thenational-campaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/MALC\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.thenational-campaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/MALC_FINAL.pdf)

**Kiss and Tell: What Teens Say About Love, Trust and Other Relationship Stuff.** [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/kiss\\_tell.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/kiss_tell.pdf)

**Can Kids Get Smart About Marriage? A Veteran Teacher Reviews Some Leading Marriage and Relationship Education Programs.** <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/Publications/Print/Print%20Can%20Kids.htm>

**Starting Early: Talking to Teens About Healthy Relationships. Why Family and Consumer Sciences is the Perfect Fit.** <http://www.nga.org/Files/ppt/0409webcastfossum.ppt>

**Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ.** [http://ag.arizona.edu/extension/weld/book\\_reports/Emotional\\_IQ-Hutchins.pdf](http://ag.arizona.edu/extension/weld/book_reports/Emotional_IQ-Hutchins.pdf)

**Listen to the complete webcast of Joan Fossum's speech on Partnerships Between MRE and Family and Consumer Sciences classes at** <http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnextoid=beb5303cb0b32010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>.

**National Healthy Marriage Resource center would like to thank Emily Luschin** for her contributions to this Tip Sheet. Mrs. Luschin received her Master of Education in Curriculum and Teaching at Boston University. She has served as a program analyst for the Administration for Children and Families Department of Health and Human Services and has worked as a research assistant for the School of Family Life.

- <sup>1</sup>Karney, B., R., Beckett, M. K., Collins, R. L., & Shaw, R. (2007). Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Adult Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs. Chapter Five: Review of Relationship Education Programs for Adolescents. RAND Labor and Population. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Administration for Children and Families. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>2</sup>Why Marriage Matters: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences. 2nd ed. New York: Institute for American Values.
- <sup>3</sup>Carver, K. P., Joyner, K., and Udry, J. R. (2003). National estimates of adolescent romantic relationships. In P. Florsheim (ed.), *Adolescent Romantic Relations and Sexual Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practical Implications* (pp. 23–56). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- <sup>4</sup>Capaldi, D. M., and Gorman-Smith, D. (2003). The development of aggression in young male/female couples. In P. Florsheim (ed.), *Adolescent Romantic Relations and Sexual Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practical Implications* (pp. 243–278). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- <sup>5</sup>Capaldi, D. M., and Gorman-Smith, D. (2003). The development of aggression in young male/female couples. In P. Florsheim (ed.), *Adolescent Romantic Relations and Sexual Behavior: Theory, Research, and Practical Implications* (pp. 243–278). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ford, K., Sohn, W., and Lepkowski, J. (2001). Characteristics of adolescents' sexual partners and their association with use of condoms and other contraceptive methods. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 33, 100–105, 132.
- Manlove, J., Franzetta, K., Ryan, S., and Moore, K. (2006). Adolescent sexual relationships, contraceptive consistency, and pregnancy prevention approaches. In A. C. Crouter and A. Booth (eds.), *Romance and Sex in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: Risks and Opportunities* (pp. 181–212). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- <sup>6</sup>Kiss and Tell: What Teens Say About Love, Trust and Other Relationship Stuff. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Dibble Institute. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.
- <sup>7</sup>Pearson, M. (2000). Can Kids Get Smart About Marriage? A veteran teacher reviews some leading marriage and relationship education programs. The National Marriage Project. Rutgers University.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup>Karney, B., R., Beckett, M. K., Collins, R. L., & Shaw, R. (2007). Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Adult Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs. Chapter Five: Review of Relationship Education Programs for Adolescents. RAND Labor and Population. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Administration for Children and Families. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Students Against Destructive Decisions. Resources: Statistics. February 2007. Retrieved July 13, 2008 at <http://www.sadd.org/stats.htm#stds>.
- <sup>13</sup>Kiss and Tell: What Teens Say About Love, Trust and Other Relationship Stuff. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. Op.cit.

- <sup>14</sup>U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-99 (October 2001, rev. 11/28/2001).
- <sup>15</sup>Silverman, J. G., Raj, A., Mucci, L., A., Hathaway, J. E. "Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Vol. 286, (No. 5, 2001).
- <sup>16</sup>Marline Pearson, personal communication, 26 June 2008.
- Karney, B., R., Beckett, M. K., Collins, R. L., & Shaw, R. (2007). *Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Adult Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs. Chapter Five: Review of Relationship Education Programs for Adolescents.* RAND Labor and Population. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Administration for Children and Families. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>17</sup>Cohen. D. *The Perfect Storm: Marketing to Youth.* The ClickZ Network. May 28, 2003. Retrieved July 12, 2008 at <http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=2212531>.
- <sup>18</sup>Karney, B., R., Beckett, M. K., Collins, R. L., & Shaw, R. op.cit.
- <sup>19</sup>Smartmarriages Listserv. FLYER | JERK Curriculum in High Schools | Cohabitation - single forever | 10 Dates to the Rescue - 10/1/07. Retrieved July 11, 2008 at [www.smartmarriages.com/listserv/archive](http://www.smartmarriages.com/listserv/archive).
- <sup>20</sup>Kay Reed, personal communication, 25 June 2008.
- <sup>21</sup>Marline Pearson, personal communication, 26 June 2008.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup>Karney, B., R., Beckett, M. K., Collins, R. L., & Shaw, R. (2007). *Adolescent Romantic Relationships as Precursors of Healthy Adult Marriages: A Review of Theory, Research, and Programs. Chapter Five: Review of Relationship Education Programs for Adolescents.* RAND Labor and Population. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation. Administration for Children and Families. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>24</sup>Bodilly, S. J., and Beckett, M. (2005). *Making Out-of-School-Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda.* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation. As of May 5, 2007: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG242/>
- <sup>25</sup>Marline Pearson, personal communication, 26 June 2008.
- <sup>26</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid.



## Appendix A

# Facts About DATING VIOLENCE

## Introduction

It's very likely that you or someone you know has been abused in a relationship. Dating violence isn't just physical. It can include mental/emotional abuse and sexual abuse. It can occur in casual dating or serious long-term relationships.

## Mental/Emotional Abuse

Mental/Emotional abuse includes:

- Embarrassing you
- Put-downs
- Cussing
- Controlling you
- Making you feel bad about yourself
- Keeping you away from other friends and family

Threats of violence are abuse and should always be taken seriously.

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes:

- Hitting
- Slapping
- Punching
- Shoving
- Kicking
- Biting
- Hair-pulling
- Using a weapon against a boyfriend/girlfriend

Teenage boys and girls both report being victims of physical violence in relationships. Normally, boys and girls use physical force for different reasons and with different results. Teens usually act violently because they are angry; boys are much more likely to use force in order to control their girlfriends, while girls more often act violently in self-defense.

Teenage girls suffer more from relationship violence, emotional and physical. Teenage girls are more likely than boys to have serious injuries and to report being terrified. In contrast, boys seldom seem to fear violence by their girlfriends, often saying that the attacks did not hurt and that it was funny.

## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is forced or unwanted sexual activity or rape. It is sexual abuse to force or pressure someone to engage in sexual activity. Trying to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol is also sexual abuse.

Girls in opposite-sex relationships are much more likely than boys to suffer from sexual abuse.

## How frequently does dating violence occur?

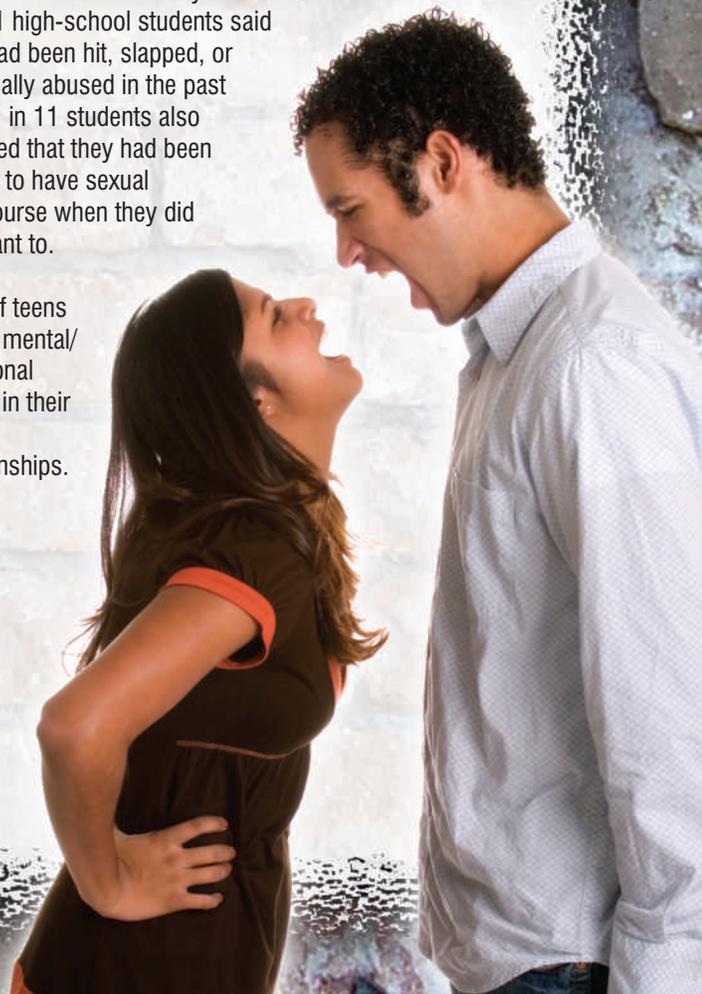
This is a difficult question to answer because some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about mental/emotional abuse and sexual violence. Past estimates of dating violence among middle school and high school students range from 28% to 96%.

One recent national survey found that 1 in 11 high-school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically abused in the past year. 1 in 11 students also reported that they had been forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.

96% of teens report mental/emotional abuse in their dating relationships.



**The Dibble Institute**  
Relationship Skills for Teens



# What You Can Do

## Know the early warning signs



- You are pressured to make the relationship very serious or to have sex early in the relationship.
- Extreme jealousy and possessiveness, saying these emotions are signs of love.
- Controlling you and forcefully making all decisions where the two of you are concerned.
- Refusing to consider your point of view or desires.
- Keeping you from spending time with close friends or family.
- Verbal abuse, including yelling, cussing, manipulation, spreading rumors and making you feel guilty.
- Drinking too much or using drugs and then blaming the alcohol and drugs for his/her behavior.
- Threatening physical violence.
- Previous abuse of a boyfriend/girlfriend or defending violence by others.

If you're in a relationship that in any way feels uncomfortable, awkward, tense or even scary, trust your feelings and get out. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

Always remember: You have every right to say no! No boyfriend or girlfriend has the right to tell you what you can or should do, what you can or should wear, or what kind of friends you should have.

## Watch for friends who are abused

Friends in abusive relationships may:

- Change their clothing or makeup;
- Lose confidence in themselves;
- Have difficulty making decisions;
- Stop spending time with you and other friends;
- Receive failing grades or quit school activities; and
- Turn to using alcohol or drugs.

If you think a friend is in an abusive relationship, try asking them:

- "You don't seem as happy as usual – are you okay?"
- "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

This indirect approach may prompt your friend to reveal what's wrong. Listen without judging, condemning, or giving unwanted advice. If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she take the steps listed above in order to find help.

If you believe your friend is in serious danger, tell an adult you trust immediately. Do not try to "rescue" your friend and try to handle the situation on your own.

## If you are in a violent, or potentially violent, relationship, do this:

- Make a safety plan and get help.
- Talk with someone you trust: a teacher, guidance counselor, doctor, friend or parent.
- Contact the police or a local domestic violence center or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE.
- Realize that violence will not just stop or go away. You cannot change your boyfriend/girlfriend by changing your behavior.
- You are not responsible for the abuse. Your boyfriend/girlfriend may need counseling or other help to change.

## Take action if you suspect that someone you know is being abusive.

If you feel you are not in danger, talk to the person about his or her use of violence. Make sure that the person understands that it is both wrong and illegal. If the person is ready to make a change, help him/her get help.

## If you are hurting someone else, have the courage to get help!

No matter what the other person does to provoke you. No matter how justified you feel. No matter what your friends do. It is never okay to harm someone else. Remember that violence is illegal and can land you in jail. You can learn new ways to:

- Deal with your anger
- Fight fair
- Communicate better
- Give and get love in relationships



Don't let shame or fear stop you. Talk to a parent, teacher, religious leader, doctor, nurse or guidance counselor immediately.

Or, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE. They can direct you to individuals and groups in your community who can help you to make a change.

## Help educate other teens about dating violence

Counsel peers, staff a hotline, or speak to classes about the signs of an abusive relationship and where to find help. Encourage your church or school to develop programs to educate teens about dating violence, and work to make sure that there are resources for abused teens in your community.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline  
(800) 799-SAFE**



Information provided by the Dibble Fund with permission from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. For additional information, please visit [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org).



**national  
healthy marriage  
resource center**

## Appendix B



# **The Dibble Institute**

## **Relationship Skills for Teens**

### **Dating Violence Protocol for Educators**

#### **Teen Dating Violence**

It is difficult to say how common dating violence is among teens because different studies and surveys ask about it in different ways and get very different results. Some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about psychological and emotional abuse and sexual violence. Some ask about dating violence over the lifetime, while others only ask about the current relationship or the past year. Past estimates of physical and sexual dating violence among high school students typically range from 10% to 25%, and estimates for college students range from 20 to 30%. Not surprisingly, even higher estimates are found when verbal threats and emotional abuse are considered.

One recent national survey found that about 1 in 10 female high-school students and about 1 in 11 male students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend in the past year.

In another recent survey in Massachusetts, almost 1 in 5 female high-school students said they had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in a dating relationship, with 9% reporting only physical abuse, 4% only sexual abuse, and 5% both physical and sexual abuse.

Teenage girls in heterosexual relationships are much more likely than teenage boys to suffer from sexual abuse.

Male and female adolescents both report being victims of physical violence in relationships. Many relationships involve mutual abuse, with both partners using violence against the other. However, it is clear that male and female adolescents use physical force for different reasons and with different results. Researchers have found that female teens suffer more from relationship violence, emotionally and physically. They are much more likely than males to have serious injuries and to report being terrified. In contrast, male victims seldom seem to fear violence by their dates or girlfriends, often saying that the attacks did not hurt and that they found the violence amusing.

#### **Dating Violence Warning Signs**

Teenagers generally do not tell people when they are involved in a violent relationship, so it is important for adults to be alert for signs that a teen may be involved in a relationship that is, or has the potential to become, abusive. Some of the following signs are just part of being a teenager. But, when these changes happen suddenly, or without an explanation, there may be cause for concern.

- Does the individual have unexplained bruises, scratches, or injuries?
- Do you see signs that the individual is afraid of his/her boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Does the boyfriend or girlfriend seem to try to control the individual's behavior, making all of the decisions, checking up on his/her behavior, demanding to know who the individual has been with, and acting jealous and possessive?
- Does the boyfriend or girlfriend lash out, criticize, or insult the individual?

- Does the individual apologize for the boyfriend or girlfriend's behavior to you and others? Has the individual casually mentioned the boyfriend or girlfriend's temper or violent behavior, but then laughed it off as a joke?
- Have you seen the boyfriend or girlfriend be abusive towards other people or things?
- Does the individual seem to have lost interest or to be giving up things that were once important? Has he/she lost interest in school or other activities?
- Has the individual's appearance or behavior suddenly changed?
- Has the individual stopped spending time with friends and family?
- Have you seen sudden changes in the individual's mood or personality? Is the individual becoming anxious or depressed, acting out, or being secretive? Is the individual avoiding eye contact, having 'crying jags' or getting 'hysterical'?
- Has the individual recently started using alcohol or drugs?

## **Responding to Students Involved in Dating Violence**

### ***Response to the Victim***

If you suspect a student is in a violent relationship, ask him/her about the relationship. Be specific about why you are concerned. If the student chooses to talk with you, listen quietly, without judging. If the student does not want to discuss it with you, encourage him/her to talk with another trusted adult and provide the names of people and organizations that can help. This could be a parent, other relative, friend of the family, clergy member, teacher, school counselor, coach or even the police. A local domestic violence program or the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE) can tell you if there is a program or support group in your community.

If the student does open up to you, focus your response on his/her needs and feelings and your concern for his/her well-being. Do not criticize or attack the abusive partner. The student will need to make the actual decision to end the abusive relationship, not you. Ask, "What can I do to help you?" Encourage the student to talk with a counselor who specializes in teen dating violence, and continue to support the student by being caring, open and non-judgmental. Whether the student is ready to leave the abusive partner or not, it is important to encourage him or her to think about ways to stay safe, for example, by making sure friends are around so that he or she is not alone with the partner.

### ***Response to the Abuser***

If you suspect that a student is hurting someone in a dating relationship, it is important to talk with the student about your concerns. Before you talk with the student, have specific examples in mind. Listen to what the student has to say, but make it clear that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop. Do not let the student deny or minimize the violence or to make excuses. Help him/her to recognize that violence is not an acceptable way to solve problems. Offer to help him/her to locate community resources that can provide counseling. If the student's behavior is truly dangerous, you may have to make the difficult decision to report the teen's violence to law enforcement.

Information provided by the Dibble Institute with permission from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. For additional information, please visit [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org).





## Appendix C

## **Questions to Consider When Selecting Settings and Partnerships for Teen Healthy Relationship Education**

- **Who are some potential partners with experience recruiting/serving teens in your community?**
- **What organizations or stakeholders have the greatest influence on or contact with youth?**
- **Which organizations have similar goals?**
- **Are there any organizations that can help fulfill your programming needs?**
- **What organization can help sustain your services?**



**national  
healthy marriage  
resource center**

## Appendix D

## **SCHOOL/YOUTH Marriage Education Programs**

**Curricula to teach in high school, middle school, youth groups, and college.**

**Source:** <http://www.smartmarriages.com/app/Directory.BrowsePrograms>

### **Active Relationships Programs: Kelly Simpson**

Nine relationships programs! Evidence-based and used with Couples, Singles, Youth, Parents and in Military communities, the programs are: Active Marriage and Best Practices (8 hours), Active Military Life Skills and Reintegration, Active Communication, Active Money Personalities, Active Romance,...

### **CONNECTIONS Youth Relationship Skills Series**

Dating and Emotions (newly revised) and Relationships and Marriage are used in 500+ schools to help teens prepare for healthy dating and successful marriages. Developed by Charlene Kamper, the courses are skill-based, interactive and ready-to-use. Topics include: Self-understanding and self-esteem;...

### **Dasi-Ziyad Family Institute - Cleveland/Krsnanandini Dasi**

The Institute empowers couples, families, youth and ex-offenders with healthy relationship skills. Interactive courses and workshops based on universal principles generate a lasting paradigm shift towards happy, healthy relationships. Premarital and marital services to couples using...

### **Dibble Institute for Marriage Education: Kay Reed**

This nonprofit, nonpartisan, and nonsectarian organization, helps young people learn the skills needed for healthy romantic relationships now and, eventually, in their marriages. We believe that we have to start with the kids if we are going to make lasting changes in our culture. The Institute...

### **Essential Disciplines for Teens**

Essential Disciplines empowers teens to experience whole relationships at school, home, and in their emerging world of work with the soft-skills needed to succeed in ALL relationships. It uses the same process and content for multiple curriculums: Teen, Marriage, and Workforce. Technology...

### **Heritage Community Services Healthy Family Formation**

Heritage Keepers Healthy Marriage Initiatives include an ACYF/Children's Bureau demonstration project serving "Fragile Families" at risk of losing their children to Foster Care. Benefits-of-Marriage and Marriage Mentor Training is provided for faith and community organizations....

## **How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk (Jerkette) - John Van Epp**

This educational, research-based, five-hour video program presents Van Epp's unique Relationship Attachment Model to spell out how singles can pace their relationship in five crucial areas so they can follow their hearts without losing their minds. Instructor Certification Packet includes...

## **LoveU2 - Marline Pearson**

THE LOVE U2® COURSES : Comprehensive relationship education for teens Teens today live and breathe in a culture that touts casual sex and casual connections. Love U2® is a series of four units that help young people acquire practical skills for emotionally healthy and ethically sound...

## **Money Habitudes: Syble Solomon**

This unique, affordable, easy-to-use deck of cards, gives individuals & couples life-changing insights into their hidden attitudes about money. Use as a stand-alone program or add to any pre-marital or marriage program on communication or finance. Workshop-in-a-Box for train-the-trainer or to...

## **One, Two...I Do! - Char Kamper**

"One, Two...I Do! On the Road to a Great Marriage" is a faith-based relationship education program for teens (ages 13-18) from Char Kamper, renowned developer of the CONNECTIONS programs, and her daughter, Shana. The 16-lesson program uses the process of "learning to..."

## **Relationality: The Amazing Real-to-Life Game About Relationships**

This informative, research-based, board game is an engaging way to teach teens about relationships but is also great fun for the classroom or families! Through role playing and realistic scenarios, teens make choices about money, education, work, romance, living arrangements, marriage,...

## **The Art of Loving Well: Nancy McLaren**

Uses classic and contemporary stories, poems, and folktales to help teenagers develop strong personal ideals and learn the social and emotional skills essential for successful friendships, marriages, and families. Each of the 41 ethnically diverse literary selections is accompanied by activities...

## **The Real Deal on love, relationships and marriage DVD/Richard Panzer**

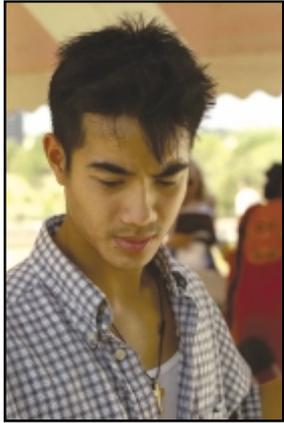
9 Week Course on a DVD! Chapters include 1) Healthy vs. unhealthy relationships; 2) What is love? Stages of intimacy; 3) Marriage - Benefits and Challenges; 4) How a struggling single mother transformed her life! 5) Warning signs of abusive relationships; 6) Living Together - trial run for...

## **WAIT (Why Am I Tempted?) TRAINING**

Learning to have the BEST sex by waiting until, and in preparation for, marriage. Not sex education, it's love education and includes: Character and Relationship Education, Positive Youth Developments and Assets, Marriage Preparation Education; Life Skills, Refusal Skills and Conflict...

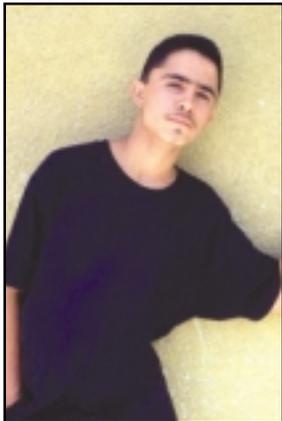
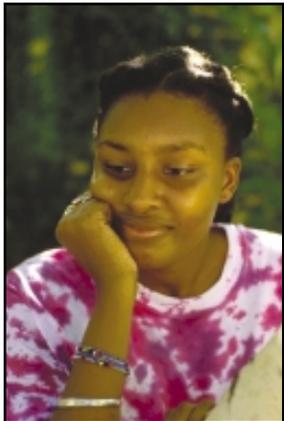


## Appendix E



## Is Marriage in Your Future?

Most teens expect to get married someday. But not all marriages are successful. Having a good marriage is more than a matter of luck. If you think marriage is in your future, you can do many things to improve your chances for success. These ten tips can guide you in making wise decisions. They can help you make fewer mistakes and avoid heartbreak in your current relationships, as well as prepare for a happy, lasting marriage.



## Afraid of Marriage?

Perhaps you've heard that that 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. It is good to know this statistic, so you don't enter into marriage lightly or think that marriage is easy. However, if you learn healthy relationship skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, and follow these ten helpful tips, you can dramatically lower your own personal chances of divorce.



The social science research on which these suggestions are based can be found at the Website of the National Marriage Project: <http://marriage.rutgers.edu>

The National Marriage Project's mission is to strengthen the institution of marriage by providing research and analysis that informs public policy, educates the American public, and focuses attention on the consequences of marriage decline for millions of American children.

The project is co-directed by two nationally prominent family experts: David Popenoe, PhD, a professor and former social and behavioral sciences dean at Rutgers, and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, PhD, an author and social critic.

The National Marriage Project  
Rutgers University  
54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., B217 LSH  
Piscataway, NJ 08854  
Phone: (732) 445 7922  
Fax: (732) 445 6110  
[marriage@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:marriage@rci.rutgers.edu)

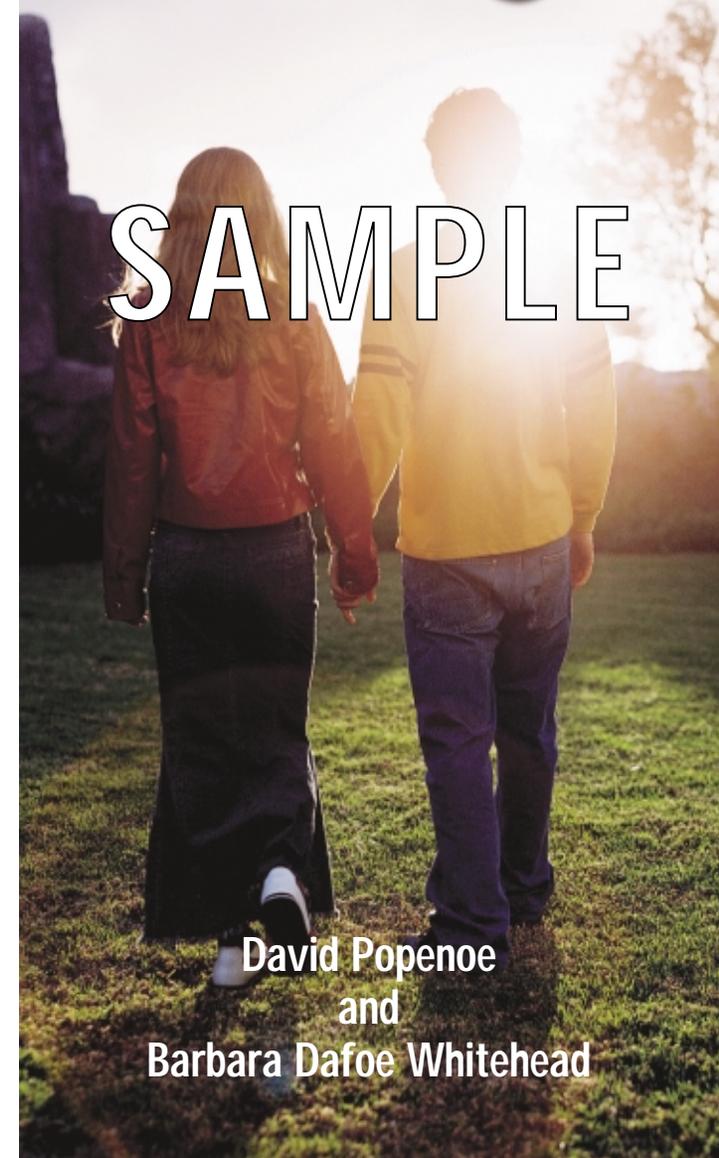


The Dibble Institute for Marriage Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping young people learn skills which enable successful relationships and marriages. We serve as a nationwide advocate and resource for youth marriage education and publish materials which help teach relationship skills.

The Dibble Institute  
P. O. Box 7881  
Berkeley, CA 94707-0881  
Phone: 1-800-695-7975  
Fax: 510-528-1956  
[www.dibbleinstitute.org](http://www.dibbleinstitute.org)

# Ten Things Teens Should Know about Marriage

# SAMPLE



David Popenoe  
and  
Barbara Dafoe Whitehead

# 10 Marriage Tips for Teens

## 1. Make marriage a top goal for your life.

There are many great things about marriage. Married people are healthier, wealthier, and happier than people who just live together or stay single. Married people even live longer!

## 2. Learn relationship skills.

Take advantage of any relationship and marriage education courses offered by your school, religious group, or other community group. These courses can be tons of fun, as well as helping you prepare for your future marriage. They may also help with your current relationships (dating, friends, siblings, parents).

## 3. Get as much education as you can before you get married.

Make sure you graduate from high school. Work toward a college degree or even a master's or higher degree. People with more education are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce. And they earn more money over their lifetimes.

## 4. Sex?

Sexual relationships carry a whole lot of baggage along with them. Worries about STDs, AIDS, or an unwanted pregnancy, or unhappiness about breaking up can make it hard to focus on your schoolwork. Most teens who are sexually active say they regret having sex and wish they had waited.

You can avoid these heartaches and regrets by waiting to have sex at least until you're out of high school, and possibly until your wedding day.

## 5. Marry in your twenties or older.

People who get married in their teens are two to three times more likely to get divorced than people who get married in their twenties or older.

## 6. Wait to have a child until after you are married and at least 20 years old.

If you don't, you are likely to live in poverty. In fact, only one-third of teen mothers ever finish high school. Having a child before you marry may cause lots of problems for both men and women. And the children of unwed parents face greater risks for problems of all kinds, including depression and mental illness, school dropout, teen pregnancy, crime, poverty, substance abuse, and suicide.

## 7. Be picky when you choose your husband or wife.

Opposites may attract, but they don't always get along together. Make sure that you know the person you plan to marry well. It helps if you have known him or her for a long time. It also helps to share the same core beliefs and values, especially about family life and children. Your marriage will be more likely to succeed if you and your future spouse have similar

backgrounds, personalities, beliefs, and goals for life.

## 8. Think twice before you decide to live with someone outside of marriage.

Contrary to popular belief, living together before marriage is not likely to strengthen your marriage or prevent a future divorce. In fact, living together before marriage is linked to a less satisfying marriage and a higher divorce risk. And the more partners you live with, the more likely you are to divorce when you do marry.

## 9. Build a relationship with an adult you can trust and work on strengthening that relationship.

If you are close to one or both of your parents, deepen your relationship with them. If your parent is not a positive role model, find an adult who is. Teens who share their lives and concerns with a caring adult—whether a parent or grandparent, friend, pastor, aunt or uncle—have fewer problems in life. And the fewer problems you have in life, the less baggage you will bring into your marriage.

## 10. Before you marry, take a premarital education course with your partner.

These courses can indicate how well matched you are as a couple, and they can help you have a more satisfying marriage.