



SIA

Survivor's Guide



This guide is intended to assist you as you navigate through the process of finding assistance. A victim's journey is full of unique challenges and difficulties, and in some cases victims are overly-referred, ignored or simply denied service. Without access to critical services, the victim feels forced to stay in the abusive relationship and is often unable to escape the cycle of violence and disenfranchised by the very system put in place to protect them.

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No Victim Left Behind

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What Is Considered Abuse?

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Physical harm is the most easily identifiable form of abuse; however, it can happen in other ways as well. Any of the actions below can be considered abuse:

- Physical violence
 - Assault (hitting, kicking, slapping, pulling one's hair, choking, etc.)
 - Injury
 - Intimidation and/or threat of bodily harm
- Sexual Assault or forced sexual contact
- Sexual harassment
- Verbal abuse resulting in emotional or psychological damage

The Signs of an Abusive Relationship

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In addition to the actions listed above regarding what is considered abuse, if your partner acts in any of the following ways towards you, seek help immediately by referring to the resources available within this guidebook:

- Your partner is possessive
- Controlling
- Limits your access to the phone, car, or money
- Forces sexual contact
- Criticizes or humiliates you
- Sees you as property or an object
- Puts down your ideas or accomplishments

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The Circle of Abuse

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Abuse is a pattern of behavior. Below is a diagram and explanation of its different stages and how it happens:

Cycle of abuse



- **Abuse:** Your significant other physically or emotionally harms you
- **Guilt:** He or she apologizes and says they didn't mean to do it
- **Excuses:** May use an excuse like, "I am so stressed from work"
- **Normal:** Relationship calms and goes back to normal
- **Fantasy:** "Honeymoon stage," he/she may shower you with gifts or compliments etc.
- **Set up:** The abuse is getting ready to erupt again

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What is Teen Dating Abuse?

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Similar to adult abuse, teen dating abuse is defined as the physical, sexual, or psychological/emotional violence within a dating relationship. It can occur in person or electronically and may occur between a current or former dating partner.¹ The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately 9.4% of high school students reported being hit or slapped by their partners in 2014.

Factors That Increase the Risk of Teen Dating Abuse?

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- Your partner's mood shifts frequently and dramatically
- He or she exhibits aggression towards peers or engages in other aggressive behavior
- Abuses alcohol or drugs
- Has a history of early sexual activity and having multiple sexual partners
- Has a friend involved in dating violence
- There is frequent conflict in your relationship
- He or she witnesses or experiences violence in the home²

Consider your partner's behavior and environment (family life, friendships, other influences) in relation to the factors above to determine if you are at risk of becoming involved in an abusive relationship.

What Should You Do if You Are a Teen in an Abusive Relationship?

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Since ending an abusive relationship poses the risk of an aggressive reaction from your partner, it is important to seek the counsel of an adult that you trust. This can be a parent, teacher, coach, counselor, etc. Inform this person what has been happening and let him or her know when you decide to end the relationship so that he or she can be ready to support you.

When you end the relationship, make sure to do so either in a public place in order to eliminate the possibility of further abuse, or end the relationship by phone or email. Be ready for him or her to accuse you of causing the abuse (which is not the case no matter what their argument is) and be wary of promises that things will change. Refer to the circle of abuse above for information about how abuse is a pattern of behavior.³

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html

² Ibid

³ <http://www.pamf.org/teen/abc/unhealthy/abuserelationships.html>

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What is Cyberabuse?

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Cyberabuse can take the form of cyberbullying, cyberstalking and revenge pornography. The effects of cyberabuse are similar to those of emotional and psychological abuse and happens through the use of computers, smart phones, text messages, chat rooms, emails and social media.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is defined as sending mean-spirited or demeaning messages to another person or posting demeaning messages or images about another to a social media website. Cyberbullying can be done at any time of day or night making the victim constantly exposed to torment. It can also be done anonymously and by multiple people. Posts and images are often very difficult to remove from the internet which exacerbates attempts at prevention. With the prevalence of technology, cyber bullying is increasing with 16% of high schools reporting as victims.⁴

Cyberstalking: Cyberstalking is the use of technology to threaten or harass another. This can mean sending threatening text messages, emails or posting threatening messages via social media. It can also mean monitoring another's communications or whereabouts on the internet by using spyware.

Revenge Pornography: Revenge pornography is defined as the act of posting pornographic photos or videos on the internet of an ex-partner for the purpose of exacting revenge. This can mean posting images or videos to social media websites or pornography sites devoted specifically for those seeking revenge toward their ex-partners.

If you are experiencing any form of cyberabuse remember it is vital that you take action immediately and 1.) Document all incidents using the document on the SIA site labeled incident log 2.) Keep all evidence including copies of online postings, text messages, emails anything pertaining to the cyberabuse and record it in the incident log by date. 3) Report to law enforcement 5.) Contact a victim advocacy agency in your area. You can check the SIA site victim resource map to help you locate a advocacy agency in your state.

⁴ <http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/>

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