

Healthy Teen Relationships Resource Guide: Promoting Healthy Sexuality and Healthy Relationships as Dating and Sexual Violence Prevention

Dating and sexual violence are preventable and we all play a role. In order to effectively prevent dating and sexual violence, we must address these issues from two angles:

- To ensure that all people have access to accurate information about what both issues entail, encourage students to take on a role to feel comfortable actively addressing these issues, and make readily available information about resources for all people who have those experiences.
- To address the social and cultural norms that allow for violence to happen. This is especially important with middle school students at this key developmental stage. We can effectively disrupt and dismantle these risk factors and harmful roles and rules by promoting and normalizing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors encouraging healthy interactions, relationships, and norms.

Healthy Teen Relationship Act (HTRA)

Requires all school districts to adopt a policy that:

- States that teen dating violence is unacceptable and is prohibited and that each student has the right to a safe learning environment;
- Incorporates age-appropriate education about teen dating violence into new or existing training programs for students in grades 7-12, and school employees as recommended by school officials;
- Identifies by job title the school officials who are responsible for receiving reports related to teen dating violence, which shall be the same school officials identified in the policy adopted by the school district under [the Safe Schools and Equality Act of 2009, which prohibits bullying, cyberbullying and harassment];
- Establishes procedures for the manner in which employees of a school are to respond to incidents of teen dating violence that take place at the school, on school grounds at school-sponsored activities or in vehicles used for school-provided transportation;
- Notifies students and parents of the teen dating violence policy adopted by the board.

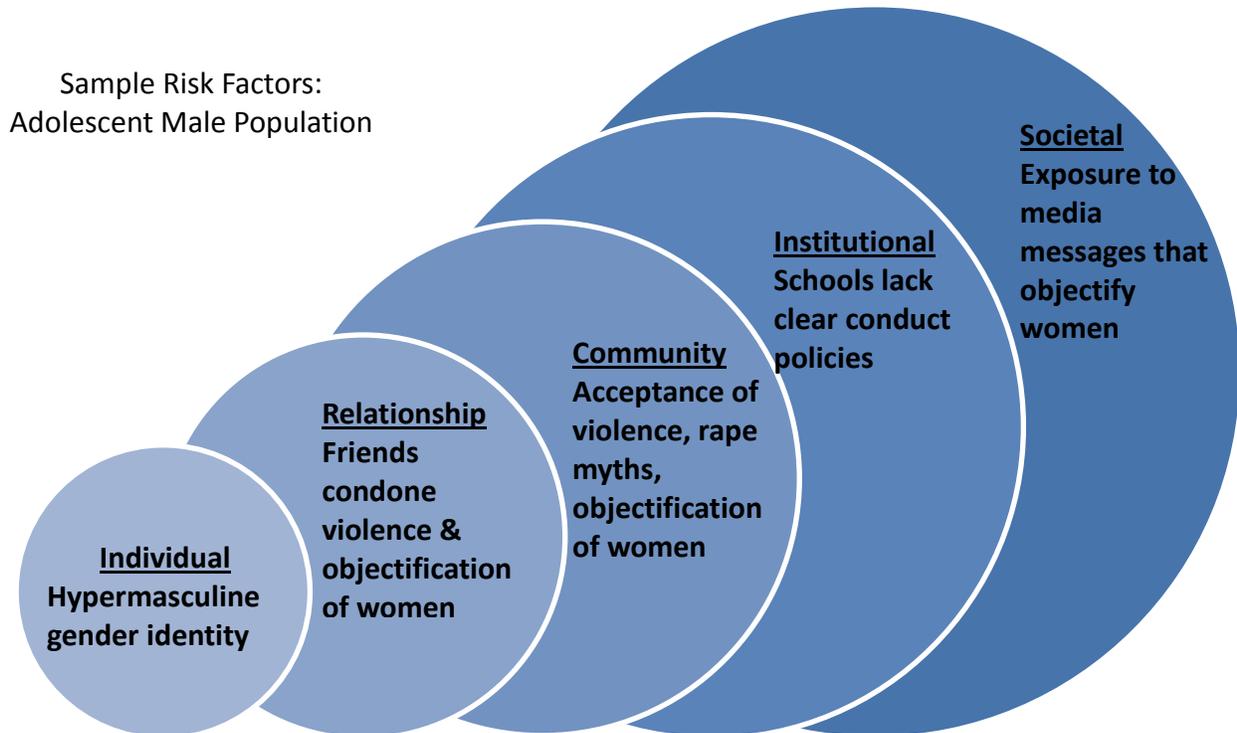
Intended as a stepping stone to start a dialogue about teen dating and sexual violence prevention in school communities throughout the state.

Primary Prevention of Dating and Sexual Violence

The Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (AGSATF) defines primary prevention of sexual violence as "approaches that seek to eliminate the root causes of sexual violence and to

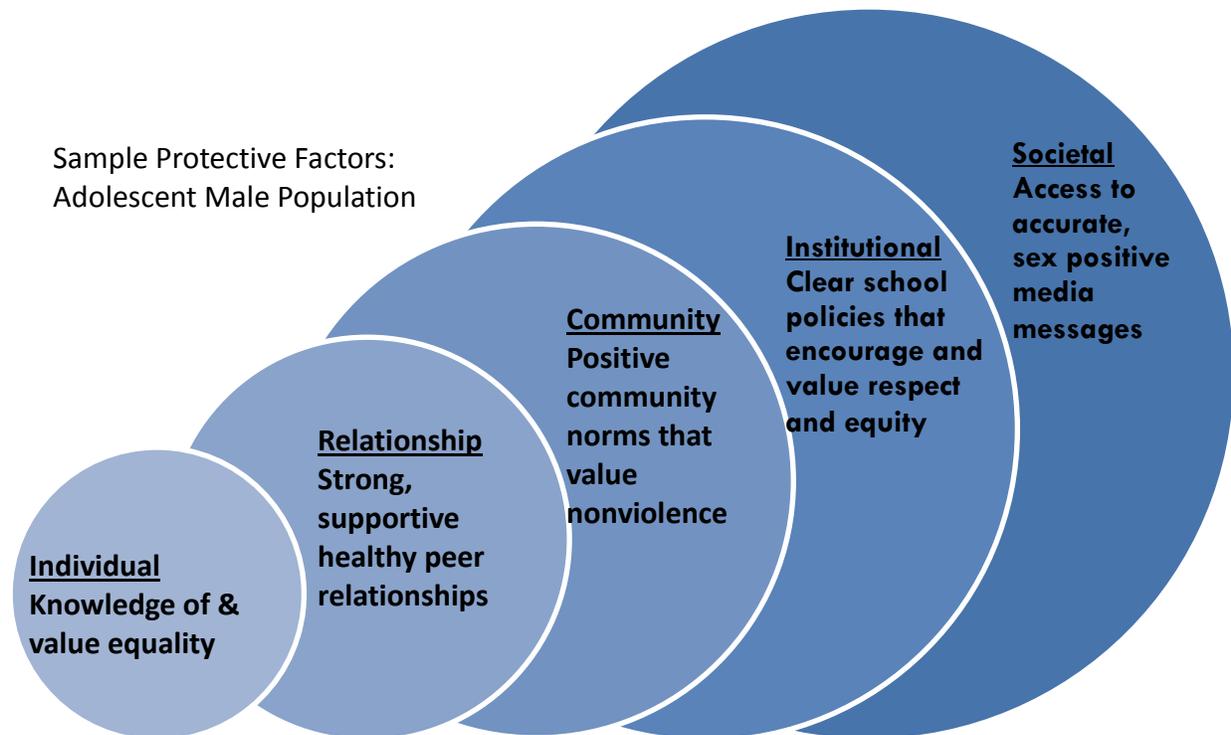
stop sexual violence from ever occurring." Unlike "public awareness" activities that raise awareness of the scope and impact of sexual violence and how to respond when sexual violence occurs, primary prevention engages individuals, communities, institutions and policy makers to create conditions that will keep sexual violence from happening.¹

Risk Factors: Conditions or characteristics that increase the likelihood of dating and sexual violence; adoption of unhealthy, harmful, and maladjusted attitudes, beliefs and/or behaviors that may increase the likelihood of perpetration of dating and sexual violence.



Protective Factors: Conditions or characteristics that decrease the likelihood of dating and sexual violence; adoption of healthy attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors that support the development of equitable, respectful, nonviolent relationships.

¹ Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force. 2014. *Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence*.



Trauma-Informed Education

A trauma-informed approach refers to how a program, agency, organization, or community thinks about and responds to those who have experienced or may be at risk for experiencing trauma; it refers to a change in the organizational culture. In this approach, all components of the organization incorporate a thorough understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma, the role that trauma plays, and the complex and varied paths in which people recover and heal from trauma.²

Statistically, nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men have been raped in their lifetime and 1 in 4 women have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner, while 1 in 7 men have experienced the same.³

Additionally, childhood exposure to trauma, both witnessing and experiencing domestic violence and child sexual abuse are major factors in the lives of many children.⁴

² Using Trauma Theory to Define Service Systems. 2001. Harris, M & Fallot, G. *New Directions for Mental Health Services*, Vol. 89, 1-99.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010. *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. Atlanta, GA.

⁴ Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults

With these considerations, it is important to note that every space we're in may hold survivors of trauma. It is thus imperative to be sure we are creating a safe, comfortable environment for everyone when discussing dating and sexual violence, including promotion of healthy norms.

Consent⁵

Consent is a mutual verbal, physical, and emotional agreement that happens without manipulation, threats, or head games.

Consent is a whole body experience. It is not just a verbal "yes" or "no" – it involves paying attention to your partner as a person and checking in with physical and emotional cues as well.

Consent is also mutual and must be continuous. You can stop at any time, you can change your mind, and just because you said yes to one thing doesn't mean you have consented to anything else.⁶

Consent is often defined as the presence of a "yes" when a no is a possible answer; it is enthusiastic and freely given.⁷

Discussing consent is an intentional way to reframe the conversation about healthy sexuality, attributing responsibility to all people to communicate with their potential sexual partner about what they want, need, like, desire, and are interested in.

Rape Culture

"Rape culture" is a theory that gives us a way to understand why dating and sexual violence happen and trace the epidemic of dating and sexual violence to its root causes-- the socio-cultural norms that persist as risk factors for perpetration of gender-based violence.

Understanding rape culture helps us to dismantle norms, rules, attitudes, and beliefs⁸ that discourage practicing healthy sexuality, make dating and sexual violence seem inevitable, blame

Felitti, Vincent J et al. American Journal of Preventive Medicine , Volume 14 , Issue 4 , 245 - 258

⁵ Lafrance, D. E., Loe, M., & Brown, S. C. (2012). "Yes means yes:" A new approach to sexual assault prevention and positive sexuality promotion. American Journal of Sexuality Education, 7, 445-460. doi:10.1080/15546128.2012.

⁶ Women's Sexual Assault Centre. (n.d.). *Consent*. Retrieved June 25, 2014, from Yes Means Yes--Project Respect: www.yesmeansyes.com/consent-0

⁷ Promoting Healthy Sexuality as Sexual Violence Prevention: Prevention & Education Subcommittee Position Paper. (2014, June 9). . Retrieved June 30, 2014, from <http://oregonsatf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Promoting-Healthy-Sexuality-as-Sexual-Violence-Prevention-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ Broderick, R., Testa, J., & Nigatu, H. (2014, February 4). What is Rape Culture?. Retrieved June 25, 2014, from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/what-is-rape-culture>

those that are victimized, and misappropriate responsibility and cause.⁹ Two of the key norms that allow rape culture to exist are victim-blaming and slut-shaming.

Victim-blaming: “Victim blaming is a devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is held responsible — in whole or in part — for the crimes that have been committed against them. This blame can appear in the form of negative social responses from legal, medical, and mental health professionals, as well as from the media and immediate family members and other acquaintances.

Some victims of crime receive more sympathy from society than others. Often, the responses toward crime victims are based on the misunderstanding of others. This misunderstanding may lead them to believe that the victim deserved what happened to them, or that they are individuals with low self-esteem who seek out violence. As a result, it can be very difficult for victims to cope when they are blamed for what has happened to them.”¹⁰

Frequently, victim-blaming happens after someone reports dating or sexual violence. However, victim-blaming language and cultural norms that support and perpetuate it are apparent in the ways many discuss dating and sexual violence prevention. Telling young women to dress more modestly, to not walk alone at night, or to watch how much they drink are examples of ways we blame potential victims and misappropriate responsibility.

Slut-shaming: Demeaning a person for what is judged by another person as being too permissive or promiscuous, having “loose” sexual morals. Most often leveraged against women for making the choice to be, or even just being perceived as enjoying, liking, or participating in sexual behaviors.¹¹ Reinforces harmful cultural norms that attribute women’s value to their perceived sexuality, most often based on how “pure” they might be deemed.¹²

Dating violence

A pattern of behaviors used to hold and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Tactics may include physical, verbal, emotional, social, technological, or sexual abuse.

Often the line of what abuse is or isn’t in our culture is drawn at physical abuse, but what we know is that other forms of abuse often start subtly and have a deeper impact on survivors. Emotional and social abuse are tactics used to control the way a person thinks about themselves, the world around them, what they deserve in relationships, and who is there to

⁹ Sexual Violence Against Women: Putting Rape Research in Context. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* June 2011 35: 342-347

¹⁰ The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime. 2009. *Victim-Blaming*.

¹¹ Khazan, Olga. *The Atlantic*. May 2014. “There’s No Such Thing As a Slut.”

¹² Valenti, Jessica. *The Purity Myth: How America’s Obsession with Virginity is Hurting Young Women*. Seal Press (2009).

support them. Abusers feel entitled to alter a person's belief system, convincing their partner that the abuse is normal and deserved. This might look like slowly chipping away at a person's self-esteem or self-worth, planting seeds of doubt about things that a survivor once believed about themselves, or convincing a person that the people who love and support them don't understand them or the relationship.

Abuse happens because a person feels entitled to power within a relationship and uses that power to control various aspects of their partner's thought process, relationships with other people, and life. People who choose to use abuse in their relationships are often unwilling or unable to take responsibility for the choices they make to hurt their partner, feeling that their behavior is justified.

We can protect against dating violence by valuing respect, practicing healthy communication, and promoting equity and equality in all relationships.

Sexual violence

Any non-consensual sex act.

Key Phrases to Respond To:

- "She's just lying."
This is an excellent example of what it means to victim-blame. What we know is that dating and sexual violence are incredibly difficult for survivors to disclose, talk about, and report. More than 60% of people who experience dating and sexual violence never report what happened to them. It's important for everyone to believe someone when they feel safe enough to disclose that they've experienced trauma.
 - **Possible response: "I believe you. I'm glad you trusted me enough to share this with me."**
- "She was asking for it."
The choice to use violence against another person is solely the responsibility of the person using the violence. No one causes another person to make that choice.
 - **Possible response: "No one deserves to be hurt or assaulted by another person."**
- "She shouldn't have drunk so much."
Responsibility lies with a person who chooses to take advantage of a partner who is under the influence of alcohol and drugs. We also know that legally, a person who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs is unable to consent. What

we know is that people who commit sexual violence seek out particularly vulnerable people.¹³

- **Possible response: “Drinking does not cause dating or sexual violence to happen nor is dating or sexual violence ever a consequence for drinking too much.”**
- “She’s had sex with lots of people.”

This is a perfect example of slut-shaming (see page 5). Everyone has the right to freely choose who they engage in sexual contact with. Just because someone has chosen to engage in sexual contact with one person, does not mean that person is interested in consenting to sexual contact with anyone else. Just because a person has consented to sexual contact with a person once, does not mean they will continue to consent to any future sexual contact. We get to decide when, where, and with whom we want to have sexual contact every single time, and at every single moment sexual contact is happening.

 - **Possible response: “Choosing to engage in a sexual relationship is a private choice that does not determine a person’s worth, value or right to consent.”**
- “They’re in a relationship.”

Sometimes, even when two people are involved in a relationship, one person believes they deserve the right to more power and to use that power to control their partner, whether through dating or sexual violence. Dating and sexual violence BOTH happen to people and it is possible to be hurt or violated by a person who you choose to be involved in a relationship with.

 - **Possible response: “We get to decide when, where, and with whom we want to have sexual contact every single time, and at every single moment sexual contact is happening.”**
- “Men just can’t control themselves.”

How unfair to men! A very small percentage of men choose to use violence to hold power over and control their partners. Most men can and do choose to respect their partners and value equality and equity in their relationships.

 - **Possible response: “Both men and women have control over their actions and the ability to make good choices.”**
- “I know him; he would never do that.”

It can be really challenging to admit and understand that someone we love, care about, and think we know might make the choice to hurt another person.

¹³ Graham, K., Bernards, S., Wayne Osgood, D., Abbey, A., Parks, M., Flynn, A., Dumas, T. and Wells, S. (2014), “Blurred Lines?” Sexual Aggression and Barroom Culture. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 38: 1416–1424. doi: 10.1111/acer.12356

Unfortunately to believe that we don't know anyone who might commit violence is an example of rape culture:

As a culture, we still refuse collectively to accept that most rapes are committed by ordinary men, men who have friends and families, men who may even have done great or admirable things with their lives. We refuse to accept that nice guys rape, and they do it often. Part of the reason we haven't accepted it is that it's a painful thing to contemplate – far easier to keep on believing that only evil men rape, only violent, psychotic men lurking in alleyways with pantomime-villain mustaches and knives, than to consider that rape might be something that ordinary men do. Men who might be our friends or colleagues or people we look up to.¹⁴

- **Possible response: To the survivor: “I believe you.”**
 - **To other people: “Nice guys” can do terrible things.**
- “Dating and sexual violence happen as often to men as they do to women.”

Although a small percentage of men do experience dating and sexual violence, what we know is that women are overwhelming the primary victims of dating and sexual violence¹⁵. This is because of the cultural norms¹⁵ that allow for violence to happen such as linking the idea that what it means to “be a man” is to have power, be violent, and in control at all times. As we deconstruct and dismantle these social norms, we see more people achieving healthy, equal, and equitable nonviolent relationships.
- **Possible response: “Although there are statistics on men who report having been assaulted by an intimate partner, research reflects the impact is dramatically different.”¹⁶**

Additional Resources:

A New (and Positive!) Metaphor for Sex (a YouTube video):

http://www.ted.com/talks/al_ernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one

¹⁴ Penny, L. (2012, August 25). It's nice to think that only evil men are rapists - that it's only pantomime villains with knives in alleyways. But the reality is different. Retrieved June 25, 2014, from

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/laurie-penny-its-nice-to-think-that-only-evil-men-are-rapists-that-its-only-pantomime-villains-with-knives-in-alleyways-but-the-reality-is-different-8079403.html>

¹⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2010. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Atlanta, GA.

¹⁶ M. B. (2014, March 26). INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES—2010: A WEB CONFERENCE FOR STATE, TERRITORIAL, TRIBAL AND NATIONAL KEY STAKEHOLDERS. PreventConnect.

<http://www.preventconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/NISVS-IPV-Key-Stakeholders-March-2014-cleared.pdf>

Described in Teaching Good Sex: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/20/magazine/teaching-good-sex.html?pagewanted=all>

Sex, etc., Sex education by teens, for teens (a website run by Rutgers University):
<http://www.sexetc.org>

Scarleteen: Sex Education for the Real World: <http://www.scarleteen.com>

Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence: <http://oregonsatf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Primary-Prevention-Position-of-Sexual-Violence-Position-Paper-3.12.14.pdf>

Using Social Media for Sexual Violence Prevention: <http://oregonsatf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ORSATF-Using-Social-Media-for-Sexual-Violence-Prevention-FINAL.pdf>

The Rational Enquirer (an annual Oregon publication from the Adolescent Sexual Health Program at OHA) :
<https://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyPeopleFamilies/Youth/Pages/re.aspx>

Break the Cycle: www.breakthecycle.org

Home Free Teen: www.homefreeteen.org

That's Not Cool: www.thatsnotcool.com

Hotline Resources:

PWCL: 888.235.5333

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800.799.SAFE (7233)

For more information, please contact:

Megan Kovacs

Education Coordinator, Raphael House of Portland

503.222.6507 x317

mkovacs@raphaelhouse.com