



## National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month is February

February is the first National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. In the past there was one week set aside for this serious issue.

Dating Violence is characterized by a pattern of controlling aggressive, coercive, or violent behaviors used by a boy/girlfriend in a dating relationship. It starts with one partner trying to gain and maintain power and control over the other partner.

The nature of dating violence can be physical, emotional, or sexual. It starts with one partner trying to gain and maintain power and control over the other partner.

If you are in an abusive relationship your partner may:

- \* Call you names
- \* Threaten you
- \* Make all the decisions
- \* Tell you what to wear
- \* Tell you who you can talk to
- \* Act extremely jealous
- \* Keep "tabs" on your whereabouts
- \* Isolate you from family and friends
- \* Physically harm you
- \* Pressure you into things that you don't want to do
- \* Force you to have sex

Statistics show that 1 in every 5 teens who have been in a serious relationship have been hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner. These statistics are only what is reported by teens. The actual number of teens in an abusive relationship is much higher. Most teens that are in an abusive relationship choose to stay in their situation. One reason is because teens are typically inexperienced with dating relationships and get a false sense of security from it. Some teens believe that their partner will change their behavior when in reality the abuse will only get worse.

If you want to end an abusive relationship there are some safe ways of doing so:

- \* Don't break up in a private place
- \* Don't accept a ride home from the person you just broke up with
- \* Know that abusers will make promises to change which rarely happens on their own
- \* Abusers will say that the abuse will never happen again in an attempt to maintain control of you
- \* Tell a parent or trusted adult/friend that you are ending the relationship
- \* You deserve to be treated with dignity and respect

You have options and you can choose better relationships. If you are a teen in an abusive relationship or know someone in an abusive relationship please seek help from an adult. Teens can speak to an advocate and the conversation will remain confidential unless it is a mandated report. An advocate can assist in finding options and support you during this time.

If you would like more information, confidential services, or support please call the DOVE program at (218) 935-5554 or the 24 hour crisis line at 1-877-830-DOVE (3683).