

# Warning Signs

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR TEENS** **YOU MAY BE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP**

- He tells you he can't live without you.
- She blames you for her problems.
- He breaks or hits things to intimidate you.
- Your weight, appearance, or grades have changed dramatically since you started seeing this person.
- He threatens to hurt himself or others if you break up with him.
- The person you are dating acts jealously, says jealous things, or exhibits aggressive behaviors towards you.
- He pressures you into having sex, or forces you to do sexual things you don't want to do by saying, "If you really loved me you would..."
- She humiliates you and belittles your opinions.
- The person you are dating slaps or shoves you in a seemingly playful way, but it happens often and doesn't seem right.
- He is jealous and possessive about the time you spend with your friends.
- She is constantly checking up on you, and asking where you are and what you are doing.
- The person you date has severe mood swings or constant bad moods.
- She wants to limit your other school activities, so you can "be together more."
- You're frightened of him and worry about how he'll react to things you say or do.
- He wants your relationship to get serious too quickly, and he refuses to take "no" for an answer.
- They blame past bad relationships on everything or everybody else instead of accepting any of the responsibility.
- She abuses drugs or alcohol and pressures you to take them with her even when you don't want to.
- His statements or actions indicate that he thinks men should be in control and women should do what they're told.

- The person you're with treats you like property rather than a person they value.
- When she gets angry she calls you names, kicks, hits, and pushes you.
- He is abusive or aggressive towards inanimate objects and animals.
- The person you are dating forces you to choose being with them over your family and friends.
- She makes you feel that her needs and desires come before yours.
- He makes you feel afraid to express your own thoughts or feelings, make decisions about how to spend your money, what to wear, where to go, or who to hang out with.
- She lashes out or blames you for her bad day.
- Your family and friends have warned you about this person or have told you that they're worried about your safety.
- He may use or own weapons, and has a history of violence and fighting.
- She blows disagreements out of proportion.
- The person you are with tells you they dislike your parents and friends.
- He has hit, pushed, choked, restrained, kicked, or physically hurt you.
- She constantly threatens to break up with you, or constantly accuses you of planning to break up with her.
- He treats his mother disrespectfully.
- The person you're with often loses their temper with you, verbally assaults you, sometimes threatens you, or brags about mistreating others.
- She wants you to be available to her at all times.
- The person you are dating treats their parents badly.
- His threats and anger are followed by vows of love and pleas for your forgiveness.

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR TEENS**

### **SOMEONE YOU KNOW MAY BE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP**

- His girlfriend is always checking up on him, calling or paging him, and demanding to know where he's been and whom he's been with.
- He acts extremely jealous when she talks to other guys, even when only a friendly conversation.
- A teen you know seems to be: emotionally broken down; sad all of the time; constantly bruised; unusually quiet; extremely withdrawn; isolated; nervous when talking around the person they're dating; acting oddly; afraid.
- Your friend seems to be: detached from everyone and everything; constantly distracted; unwilling to listen to your advice about her relationship; uninterested in your observations; ill and out of school a lot; unable to stop crying.
- Her weight, appearance, or grades have changed dramatically since she started dating him.
- He always seems worried about upsetting her.
- Since she started dating him, she frequently cancels plans with you and other friends at the last minute, giving reasons that sound untrue.
- He constantly apologizes for her behavior and makes excuses for her.
- She has injuries she can't explain, or the explanation she gives seems lame.
- You've seen him lose his temper and break or damage things when he's angry.
- She seems depressed a lot since she's been dating him.
- Since they've been dating, he's given up things that used to be important to him, such as spending time with friends or the activities he used to participate in.
- She constantly worries about making him angry.
- He constantly talks about how to do something harmful, or says how 'cool' violent acts are.
- Since he began dating her, he has become more and more isolated from everyone else.
- When she and her boyfriend are together with other people, he tells mean stories about her, calls her names like, "stupid," "slut," "dog," or generally puts her down.
- Someone you know who is in a relationship suddenly seems to have noticeable medical problems: they're always going to the doctor; are out sick a lot; show weight loss and/or hair loss.
- One of the teens has a history of being cruel or abusive in their past relationships.

## WARNING SIGNS FOR PARENTS

- Since your teen has been dating this person, they've dropped school activities that used to be important to them.
- Since he's been dating her, your son's grades have begun to fail.
- You see sudden, uncharacteristic changes in your daughter's clothing or make-up that only began after she started dating him.
- Since your teen has been seeing this person, you've noticed a change in their body language (e.g. slouching, biting fingernails, nervousness, little or no eye contact).
- You see constant bruises, notice other signs of injury, or damaged personal property, and your teenager's explanations seem out of place or don't make sense.
- Your son's girlfriend has an extraordinary influence on his behavior and decisions.
- Your teen is not eating, not talking, and not acting as they normally would.
- You notice sudden changes in your teenager's mood or personality since they began dating this person. They have a constant bad temper and emotional outbursts.
- Your son seems increasingly anxious or depressed since he's been seeing her.
- Your daughter's conversations with her boyfriend are often in the form of explanations, concerning where she's been, what she's been doing, and whom she's been with.
- Since he started seeing her, your son has suddenly become secretive and is acting out. (Teens naturally have some secretive behaviors since this is a period in life when they are trying to establish their identity. Parents should respect that but pay attention to an increase in secretive or odd behaviors.)
- Your daughter stopped seeing friends and family members, and is becoming more and more isolated.
- Since they began dating, your teenager is avoiding eye contact with you, having 'crying jags,' or getting 'hysterical.'
- Your son constantly apologizes for his girlfriend's behavior and makes excuses for her.
- Your teen has a sudden change in dress, which uncharacteristically covers them up (it may be to cover injuries).
- Your daughter's boyfriend acts extremely jealous when others pay attention to her...especially when it's other guys.

- *Excessive* telephone calling can be a sign of an abusive relationship. Pay attention to that, especially if you notice much of the conversation is your teen justifying what they've been doing and with whom.
- You know your teen's boyfriend or girlfriend has a temper, but when they're around you they're extraordinarily charming.
- Your son's girlfriend tells him that you don't like her.
- When your daughter and her boyfriend are together around you, you notice he calls her names and puts her down.
- Since your teenager started dating this person, they have become increasingly insecure, destructive and angry.
- Your teen shows bullying behaviors, which could indicate they have the potential to be abusive in a dating relationship.

## WARNING SIGNS FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- Since the two students started hanging out with each other, one of them is having consistent school attendance problems.
- A previously good student has a noticeable downward change in their grades and you know they've been hanging out with someone in particular since their schoolwork began to suffer.
- A student suddenly requests changes in their school schedule.
- A female student has a sudden noticeable weight change.
- You notice a student suddenly no longer hangs out with the group of students they generally spent time with and instead are hanging out with one particular person all the time.
- A student demonstrates changes in their behavior that are more passive or quiet than usual.
- A student seems suddenly isolated from the clique she used to be with and appears sad or withdrawn.
- One person seems to be controlling the other.
  - *Physical: one person's arm is always firmly around the other person.*
  - *Social: one of the two people looks down or straight ahead – not at others.*

- There is a drastic shift from the way the kid usually dressed since they've been hanging out so much with one particular person. If their clothing is unusually covering, they may be hiding injuries.
- You notice a student has constant bruising or other injuries.
  - *A female student has constant bruising on her arms.*

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL COUNSELORS**

- When you ask about the teen's relationship with the person they are dating they say "fine" in a quick response, are generally non-responsive, or silent, and they don't make eye-contact with you.
  - *Be aware that in some cultures, such as in Native American culture, prolonged eye-contact may be a form of disrespect. So the physician or other health care professional should be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create unwarranted problems.*
- The teen seems to have little social interaction with other teens outside of the person they are dating.
  - *They no longer hang out with their usual friends and seem sad about that.*
- It sounds like they are covering up for the person they are dating.
  - *They give suspicious excuses when you ask certain questions about the person.*
  - *The teen's friend alerted you about concerns regarding the couple, but when you ask about it, the teen makes excuses for their boyfriend's/girlfriend's behavior, which doesn't sound valid or sincere.*
- The teen is having school attendance problems that began when they started dating a particular person.
- One person in the relationship is clearly controlling the other.
- The teen has bruising or other injuries that seem odd or not adequately explained.
  - *A female has bruising on her arms.*
- The teen's clothing seems uncharacteristic for the season or is extremely covering. They may be dressing to cover up injuries!
- A student suddenly requests your help to change their school schedule.
- The teen refuses to participate in the conversation when you attempt to ask pointed ques-

tions about your suspicions of abuse or when you suggest intervention.

- *Or they make light of your suspicions and insist everything's OK, or the problem is just a minor lover's spat.*

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR PHYSICIANS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**

- Your teen patient's demeanor is guarded or seems fearful.
- Your teenage patient has physical complaints or signs of injury with no causal explanations.
- You are seeing this teenage client because of a drug overdose or suicide attempt.
- The patient complains of frequent headaches or other signs of stress.
- You notice your teen patient has injuries in various stages of healing or has several health issues of concern...all at the same time.
- Your teenage patient suffers from anxiety, depression, or insomnia.
- She says she was assaulted by an alleged "stranger," but her story doesn't seem to support that.
- When you ask your patient questions about their boyfriend/girlfriend, they seem evasive or guarded, and won't make eye-contact with you.
  - *Be aware that in some cultures, such as in Native American culture, prolonged eye-contact may be a form of disrespect. So the physician or other health care professional should be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create unwarranted problems.*
- You notice she has mid-arm bruising, and she gets nervous and anxious when you ask about it.
- Your teen patient has ulcers or other stomach problems.
- When you ask your teen patient how he's doing in school, you find out he has failing grades and no future school plans.
- You suspect an abusive relationship, and mention it to your teen client, but they become unduly embarrassed and deny the suggestion quickly and strongly.
- Your teen patient has experienced dramatic weight loss and/or hair loss.

- She appears to have an eating disorder.
- Your teenage patient’s boyfriend or girlfriend won’t leave the exam room and, when you ask questions about injuries or other concerns, the patient defers to them or the partner answers without giving your patient the opportunity to do so.

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR JUDGES AND COURT PERSONNEL**

- In the courtroom, the ‘victim’ seems extremely anxious, embarrassed, and hesitant to talk about what happened to them.
- When questioned, the accused male suggests that men are superior to women.
- During testimony, there is evidence that one of the teens in the relationship plays an excessively protective role.
- In the courtroom, the “alleged” victim verbally taunts the accused.
- During testimony, the accused uses derogatory comments in reference to race, gender or sexual orientation.
- The alleged victim appears extremely fearful of the accused.
- The accused is extremely non-chalant or disrespectful of court authority and combative towards the judge, the attorneys, other court personnel and adults.

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR ATTORNEYS**

- A review of the teen’s home situation shows problems, such as an alcoholic parent, family violence, or other abusive behaviors.
- Interaction between the victim and perpetrator is very strained, volatile, or one seems fearful of the other.
- The teen wears clothing that seems to be extremely covering for the season. A teen who has covered themselves with clothing may be hiding bruises or other injuries!

- Non-verbal body language, such as shyness, averting eyes, non-communicative demeanor, anxiety or other signs of fear may indicate victimization.
  - *Be aware that in some cultures, such as in Native American culture, prolonged eye-contact may be a form of disrespect. Therefore, be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create unwarranted problems.*
- The breath of the accused smells like alcohol, their eyes are glassy, or they have a history of substance abuse.
- Your client is getting constant phone calls, text messages or voicemails and seems upset by them.
- Your client seems afraid to be in the same vicinity as the accused and generally fears being alone.
- The teen is extremely fearful at your suggestion that they'll have to be in a courtroom with the accused.

## **WARNING SIGNS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

- As an SRO on campus, you notice:
  - *A student appears to suddenly have lost a lot of weight since they began hanging out with one particular person.*
  - *Constant verbal arguments within student 'dating' relationships.*
  - *Signs of physical abuse:*
    - *Constant or severe bruises or other injuries.*
    - *Clothing that seems uncharacteristic or out of season (clothing may be used to cover up injuries).*
- When you are called to a scene, a records-check reveals that one or both teens were in a past yet similar incident involving abusive behavior or battery.
- One of the teens at the scene appears disheveled, has torn clothing, bruises or scrapes, or seems sad or afraid.
- At a scene, when you ask the two teenagers if they're OK, or what happened to them, their reply doesn't seem valid, or they want to dismiss it as 'nothing serious.'
- When questioning the teens, one looks to the other to give answers, or one answers your questions without giving the other teen the opportunity to reply.

- One of the teens appears intensely fearful, guarded, or anxious at your questions and won't make eye-contact with you.
  - *Be aware that in some cultures, such as in Native American culture, prolonged eye-contact may be a form of disrespect. Therefore, be aware of cultural differences which, if wrongly interpreted, could exacerbate or create unwarranted problems.*
- The teen is quick to deny suggestions of abuse, or becomes intensely protective of the other teen when you discuss the possibility of abuse with them.
- Warning signs of interpersonal violence are present, along with indicators of drug or alcohol use.

## WARNING SIGNS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

- A teen's sitting in the back of the room, not participating in discussions, and appearing angry concerning the topic.
- The student exhibits extremely low self-esteem.
- You've been alerted about the behavior of a teenage boy whose father is known to be rude and disrespectful of women.
- You notice a teen has physical signs of possible abuse, such as bruising and cuts.
- A student wears unseasonable or uncharacteristic clothing, which may be hiding injuries.
- A student suddenly requests changes in their school schedule.
- Be aware that some teens will try hard to demonstrate no signs of abuse when they are being victimized.
  - *They may put a lot of effort into looking like the 'perfect student;' or someone who goes about their daily responsibilities like a robot; or someone who talks about their relationship as if it's unusually 'perfect.'*
- Though they have a reputation for being aggressive and sometimes violent, they're initially very nice with the person they're pursuing.
- A capable student doesn't put forth the effort to do well. They seem like they don't care.