



SESSION 2

Defining Dating Abuse

Description

Through the discussion of scenarios and the review of statistics, students clearly define what dating abuse is.

Learner Outcomes

By the end of this session, students will be able to

- identify harmful dating behaviors
- define physically and emotionally abusive behaviors
- identify physical and emotional abuse in dating relationships
- be more likely to identify abusive behaviors as abusive
- be more aware of their susceptibility to dating abuse
- be more likely to reject abuse as normal in dating relationships

SESSION 2 AT A GLANCE

Total Time: 50 minutes

Part 1: (5 minutes)

Ground Rules and
Homework

Part 2: (6 minutes)

Identifying Harmful
Behaviors

Part 3: (25 minutes)

What Is Abuse?

Part 4: (7 minutes)

Defining Abusive
Dating Relationships

Part 5: (5 minutes)

Facts about Dating
Abuse

Part 6: (2 minutes)

Conclusion

Materials Needed

- ground rules poster (from session 1)
- optional*: student journals (if students didn't keep them)
- masking tape
- chalkboard, dry-eraseboard, or flipchart
- chalk and/or markers
- Defining Dating Abuse Scenarios (handout 5) (two pages)
- scissors
- pens or pencils

Preparation Needed

1. Read this session's background information.
2. Post the ground rules, if they aren't still up.
3. Obtain local or state statistics on dating abuse from your community's domestic violence crisis center, county mental health service, or local university. If you can't find local or state statistics, use the national statistics provided in this lesson.
4. Photocopy handout 5 (one for each student).

Background Information

Almost everyone holds an opinion on the sensitive issues of violence and abuse in dating relationships. Sometimes a discussion about dating abuse will affect people at a very personal level. Be aware of this fact. To facilitate this second session, you'll need to be willing to hear things with which you disagree. The primary goal of the session is to stimulate a good discussion that airs many different sides of the issue.

Session 2 begins by asking the students to list harmful behaviors. Starting with harmful instead of abusive behaviors makes two subtle points: First, the meaning of the word "harmful" implies the consequences of actions.

Second, the students are likely to think of behaviors that are painful but not necessarily abusive. This list will help you later differentiate between normal conflict in a relationship and abuse.

Throughout the session's discussions, many controversial issues may arise. Although it may feel uncomfortable not to personally address each issue, your role as facilitator is to bring out all opinions around the definition of abuse and to explain the definition used in the *Safe Dates* program (see part 4). There are bound to be loose ends at the end of the session when covering such a complicated topic in fifty minutes.



PART 1

5 minutes

► **Ground Rules and Homework**

The purpose of part 1 is to review the ground rules and to briefly talk about the homework assignment from session 1.

1. Explain:

To start out the session, we're going to review our ground rules and talk about your homework assignment from session 1.

2. Ask one of the students to read the ground rules (they should be posted in your classroom).

3. Ask:

Does anyone have any additional ground rules to add today?

Add any suggested ground rules to the list.

4. Briefly explain your policy on reporting dating abuse or other violence being done by or to students. State this policy up front so students don't feel set up or betrayed if they reveal abusive situations to you.

5. Explain:

Your homework assignment was to think about how you want to treat a dating partner. Would anyone like to share how he or she wants to treat a boyfriend or girlfriend?

Allow a few students to share.

6. *Optional:* Check off whether students completed their homework.

Teacher's Tip ✓

If students share negative ideas to get attention, don't make a big deal of it. Just say, "That's too bad" and move on to the next student.

PART 2

6 minutes

► Identifying Harmful Behaviors

The purpose of part 2 is to acknowledge a broad spectrum of harmful behaviors that occur in dating relationships.

1. Explain:

In the last session, we talked about qualities we want in all caring relationships, particularly dating relationships. Today, we'll be talking about characteristics of harmful dating relationships.

2. Write "Harmful Behaviors" on the chalkboard, dry-erase-board, or flipchart. Then draw two columns. Label one column "Physical Harm" and the other column "Emotional Harm."

3. Ask the students to name things that people do in dating relationships that are harmful. Write each student's response in the appropriate column.

4. Sometimes adolescents can easily list physically harmful behaviors but neglect emotionally harmful behaviors. If the class is coming up with only physical behaviors (such as hitting, pushing, shoving, spitting, pulling hair), probe them by asking the following questions:

- **What about threatening or spreading rumors about a girlfriend or boyfriend?**
- **What about making fun of a date in front of his or her friends?**
- **What other behaviors are emotionally or psychologically harmful?**

Develop as extensive a list as possible with the students. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise, so write down everything the students mention. A list of harmful behaviors typically mentioned by students can be found on the next page.

Teacher's Tip ✓

If the students have a hard time thinking of harmful dating behaviors, encourage them to think about dating relationships they've seen on television or have heard about.

Typical Harmful Behaviors Mentioned by Students

PHYSICAL HARM	EMOTIONAL HARM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hitting • scratching • pushing • pinching • choking • spitting • shaking • shoving • forcing • biting • pulling hair • using a weapon • throwing things • keeping a date from leaving • molestation • rape • forcing unwanted sexual actions • damaging personal property • acting in an intimidating way • purposefully injuring an animal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calling a date names • criticizing opinions • ignoring a date's feelings • isolating a date from others • behaving jealously • telling lies • scaring a date • cheating on a date • making someone feel guilty • spreading rumors • threatening to hurt a date • threatening to hurt oneself • using sexually derogatory names • criticizing beliefs about sex • putting down family and friends • driving recklessly to scare a date • humiliating a date in public or private • insulting a date's beliefs or values • displaying inappropriate anger

PART 3

25 minutes

HANDOUT

► **What Is Abuse?**

The purpose of part 3 is to allow students to debate what abuse is and to begin to define what it means for the class.

1. Explain:

Some behaviors seem obviously abusive, while it's difficult to decide about other behaviors, depending on what else is going on.

2. Pass out a copy of handout 5, Defining Dating Abuse Scenarios, to all students. Select four students. Assign each of the four students to read one of the scenarios.

3. One at a time, have the students read their scenarios to the class. After each scenario, ask students the question(s) that follow each scenario below. Reinforce that there are no right or wrong answers in this activity.

4. Write all of the students' answers to the "Why?" questions on a chalkboard, dry-eraseboard, or flipchart. These answers will help students form their own definition of dating abuse.

SCENARIO 1: JASON AND MEGAN

Jason invited several of his friends and his girlfriend, Megan, to his house to watch movies on Friday night. Jason asked Megan if she would put out some chips and drinks for everyone. She said that she didn't mind. When Jason's friends arrived, they all sat down to watch movies.

When someone finished a drink or when the bowl of chips was empty, Jason would tell Megan to go to the kitchen for refills. When this happened for the third time, Megan said she wouldn't be their waitress. She wanted to watch the movie and they could help themselves to the food in the kitchen if they wanted it.

Jason got angry. He ordered Megan to get his friends' drinks. When she refused, Jason hit her across the face and dragged her into the kitchen. Jason's friends had seen he and Megan fight like this many times.

Teacher's Tip ✓

This scenario may be used to point out both physical and emotional abuse.

Scenario 1 Questions:

a. Is Jason abusive? Why or why not?

Write the students' responses on the board.

b. What if this scenario had not ended with Jason hitting Megan. Instead, Jason got angry and ordered her to get his friends' drinks. When she refused, he "got in her face" and said, "What did you say?" Megan responded by withdrawing and being quiet. Is that still abuse?

c. If this was the first time Jason and Megan had fought, would it still be abuse?

Note: This scenario can also be used to encourage students to think about the difference (if there is any) between violence that happens one time and reoccurring violence.

SCENARIO 2: CHRISTINA AND JUAN

Christina and Juan have been dating for a few weeks. Juan likes Christina, but he isn't in love with her. He wants to date another girl in his health class. When he tells Christina that he wants to break up, she gets angry. Then she starts crying. Juan is uncomfortable. He doesn't know what to say, but he doesn't want to be in a relationship with Christina anymore.

Scenario 2 Question:

a. Is Juan abusive? Why or why not?

Write the students' responses on the board.

Note: Dating may involve difficult and painful experiences, but those experiences aren't always abusive. Misunderstandings and thoughtlessness may make a person feel bad, but such conflicts can be resolved in a way that allows both people to express themselves.

Teacher's Tip ✓

This scenario can be used to point out that not all harmful behaviors and conflicts are necessarily abusive.

Teacher's Tip ✓

This scenario can be used to point out that guys can be hurt by their girlfriends' abusive behaviors too.

SCENARIO 3: TYRONE AND NICOLE

Tyrone bought Nicole a compact disc by her favorite group for her birthday. Nicole opened the CD and at first she seemed to love the gift. Then, however, she asked where the rest of her gifts were. When Tyrone said that he just got the CD for her birthday present, Nicole got angry. She started screaming at him. She said that she expected more than a lousy CD for her birthday, and she broke the CD in half over her knee.

*Scenario 3 Question:***a. Is Nicole abusive? Why or why not?**

Write the students' responses on the board.

Note: You could read the scenario again, switching Tyrone's and Nicole's names, and ask the students if they feel differently when the roles are changed.

You may want to add at this point that all kinds of people suffer from abuse in dating relationships: girls and boys; whites, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians; students born in rich neighborhoods and students born in poor neighborhoods; people who come from abusive homes and people who do not; people who have dated a lot and people who have just begun dating.

SCENARIO 4: TAU AND LU

Teacher's Tip ✓

This scenario can be used to show that not all controlling behaviors are violent or obvious. By making Tau feel guilty, Lu is isolating her from her friends. However, his tactics may make him seem "sweet." And it may seem as if the problem is with Tau.

Tau has a group of very close girlfriends. She enjoys going to movies and the mall with them. When she met Lu and they fell in love, the couple began spending every spare minute together—that was three months ago. All of Tau's friends like Lu, but they miss being able to spend time with Tau. Tau would like to go out with them as well. But every time she tells Lu that she's going out with her girlfriends, Lu tells her how much he misses her when she's gone, that he always wants her by his side. Tau loves Lu and she never wants to hurt him. As a result, though, she feels too guilty to leave Lu even for a few hours to spend time with her old friends.

Scenario 4 Questions:

a. Is Lu abusive? Why or why not?

Write the students' responses on the board.

b. Is Tau abusive? Why or why not?

Write the students' responses on the board.

Note: You may also point out that dating abuse situations aren't typically "cut and dry." The person may be wonderful, supportive, and romantic most of the time, but in just one or two situations she or he is controlling or manipulative.

PART 4

7 minutes

► **Defining Abusive Dating Relationships**

The purpose of part 4 is to distinguish when harmful behaviors are abusive.

1. Explain:

Based on what we just talked about in these four scenarios, I'd like to define "dating abuse."

Summarize the key points from your discussion, including the following:

- Harmful behaviors are abusive when . . .
 - a. they're used to *manipulate*
 - b. they're used to *gain control*
 - c. they're used to *gain power over* someone
 - d. they make you *feel bad* about yourself or other people you're close to (friends, family, and so on)
 - e. they make you afraid of your boyfriend or girlfriend
- An abusive boyfriend or girlfriend can use physical or emotional attacks.
- Emotional and physical abuse are equally serious.

2. Bring the class' attention back to the list of harmful behaviors they created at the beginning of this session.

3. Explain:

When some of these actions, particularly the emotional actions (such as behaving jealously or making someone feel guilty) happen once, it may not be abusive. It becomes a problem when these actions happen more than once and when they're used to manipulate, control, gain power over, or to make a person feel bad. Any use of physical or sexual violence, however, is abusive, even if it's done only once.

PART 5

5 minutes

► **Facts about Dating Abuse**

The purpose of part 5 is to give students factual information about dating abuse. This information contradicts common misperceptions about abuse in dating relationships and portrays dating abuse as a serious and pervasive problem in our society.

1. Share the following national statistics on dating abuse:

- **Between 10 and 38 percent of high school students have been victims of dating violence.¹**
- **Among students who are *currently* dating, as many as 59 percent have experienced physical violence, and 96 percent have experienced psychological or emotional abuse.²**
- **Adults who use violence with their dating partners often began doing so during adolescence, with the first episode typically occurring by age fifteen.³**
- **Young women between the ages of fourteen and seventeen represent 38 percent of those victimized by date rape.⁴**

1. Carolyn Tucker Halpern, Selene G. Oslak, Mary L. Young, Sandra L. Martin, and Lawrence L. Kupper, "Partner Violence among Adolescents in Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health," *American Journal of Public Health* 91, no. 10 (October 2001).

2. Ibid.

3. J. Henton, R. Cate, J. Koval, S. Lloyd, and S. Christopher, "Romance and Violence in Dating Relationships," *Journal of Family Issues* 4, no. 3 (1983): 467–82.

4. Robin Warshaw, *I Never Called It Rape: The MS. Report on Recognizing, Fighting and Surviving Date and Acquaintance Rape* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

- **Rapes by acquaintances account for 60 percent of all rapes reported to rape crisis centers.**⁵
2. Share any local statistics you can find on dating abuse. Local statistics may have a greater impact on students than national statistics.
 3. Also share the following key concepts:
 - **Both girls and boys are victims of abuse.**
 - **Both girls and boys are perpetrators of abuse.**
 - **Teenagers from all neighborhoods, income levels, and ethnic groups experience abuse in dating relationships.**
 - **Dating abuse can happen to anyone in any relationship.**
 - **Abuse almost always reoccurs in a relationship. It doesn't just go away.**
 - **Most abuse gets more severe over time.**

PART 6

2 minutes

► **Conclusion**

1. Explain:

Everyone needs to know how to deal with dating abuse for two primary reasons: (1) in case they end up in an abusive relationship themselves; and (2) in case a friend in an abusive relationship turns to them for help.

Knowing how you want to be treated will help you determine whether you're in an abusive relationship. Use your own list of harmful behaviors as warning signs for abuse. If you aren't being treated the way you want to be, then you have some choices to make about the relationship.
2. Remind students to bring their journals to the next session (if you don't collect them).

5. Carol Sousa, "The Dating Violence Intervention Project," in *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*, ed. Barrie Levy (Englewood, N.J.: Seal Press, 1998).

Defining Dating Abuse Scenarios

Scenario 1: Jason & Megan



Jason invited several of his friends and his girlfriend, Megan, to his house to watch movies on Friday night. Jason asked Megan if she would put out some chips and drinks for everyone. She said that she didn't mind. When Jason's friends arrived, they all sat down to watch movies.

When someone finished a drink or when the bowl of chips was empty, Jason would tell Megan to go to the kitchen for refills. When this happened for the third time, Megan said that she wouldn't be their waitress. She wanted to watch the movie and they could help themselves to the food in the kitchen if they wanted it.

Jason got angry. He ordered Megan to get his friends' drinks. When she refused, Jason hit her across the face and dragged her into the kitchen. Jason's friends had seen he and Megan fight like this many times. :-O

Scenario 2: Christina & Juan

Christina and Juan have been dating for a few weeks. Juan likes Christina, but he isn't in love with her. He wants to date another girl in his health class. When he tells Christina that he wants to break up, she gets angry. Then she starts crying. Juan is uncomfortable. He doesn't know what to say, but he doesn't want to be in a relationship with Christina anymore.

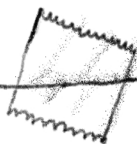


Scenario 3: Tyrone & Nicole



Tyrone bought Nicole a compact disc by her favorite group for her birthday. Nicole opened the CD and at first she seemed to love the gift. Then, however, she asked where the rest of her gifts were. When Tyrone said that he just got the CD for her birthday present, Nicole got angry. She started screaming at him. She said that she expected more than a lousy CD for her birthday, and she broke the CD in half over her knee.

Scenario 4: Tau & Lu



Tau has a group of very close girlfriends. She enjoys going to movies and the mall with them. When she met Lu and they fell in love, the couple began spending every spare minute together—that was three months ago. All of Tau's friends like Lu, but they miss being able to spend time with Tau. Tau would like to go out with them as well. But every time she tells Lu that she's going out with her girlfriends, Lu tells her how much he misses her when she's gone, that he always wants her by his side. Tau loves Lu and she never wants to hurt him. As a result, though, she feels too guilty to leave Lu even for a few hours to spend time with her old friends.

