



**TEEN DATING VIOLENCE  
AWARENESS MONTH**

# **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month**

# **Teen Resource Guide**

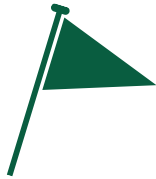


# THE RELATIONSHIP SPECTRUM

All relationships exist on a spectrum from healthy to abusive with unhealthy somewhere in between. Abusive relationships don't happen overnight and often have a gradual escalation of unhealthy behaviors.

## GREEN FLAGS & HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

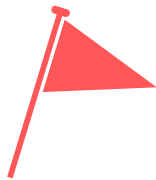
Healthy relationships consist of many different elements that make them strong and healthy. We like to call these characteristics green flags.



- Communication
- Support
- Independence
- Trust
- Respect
- Boundaries
- Honesty
- Equality
- Fun

## RED FLAGS & UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Unhealthy relationships are based in attempts to control the other person. Often, the healthy characteristics start to go away and red flag behaviors develop. Red flags are warning signs that a relationship could turn abusive.



- Jealousy
- Possessiveness
- Dishonesty
- Isolation
- Breaks in communication
- Constantly checking in
- Controlling what you wear
- Playing head games

## ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH POWER & CONTROL

In abusive relationships one person is making all of the decisions and there is an imbalance of power and control. Power and control are maintained through different forms of abuse, including:

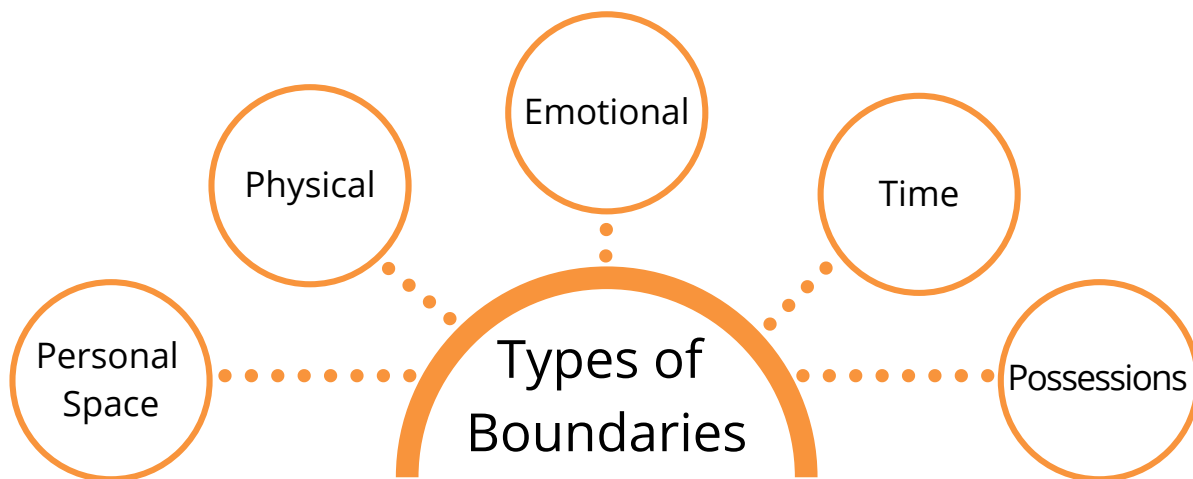
- Physical
- Emotional
- Digital
- Verbal
- Sexual
- Economic

# ASSERTING YOUR BOUNDARIES

## WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?



Boundaries are like lines that we cannot cross. Everyone has different levels of boundaries that can change based on a number of factors. In a healthy relationship, both people clearly communicate their boundaries and respect the other's boundaries.



**Check out the examples below to see how the characters assert their boundaries.**

Manuel and Chris are joking around when Manuel pushes Chris pretty hard. Respectfully, but without smiling or laughing, Chris makes eye contact with Manuel and says, *"I know we are just playing around, but I don't like people putting their hands on me like that. Don't push me again."*

Naomi and Thomas are dating. Thomas has plans with his friends to go to the movies. While he is out, Naomi texts him asking where he is and who he is with. He steps away from his friends to call her. On the phone, he says, *"I trust you and don't constantly message you when you are out with your friends. I want to be able to enjoy my time with my friends and not be glued to my phone. You should trust me and not feel the need to keep checking in on me."*

Kyle and Sam have been dating for 2 months. Kyle says I love you to Sam, but Sam doesn't feel comfortable saying it back yet. What can Sam say to set boundaries in terms of Sam's comfort level and how Kyle's comment made them feel?

# DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

## WHAT ARE DIGITAL BOUNDARIES?

In today's highly connected world, our digital devices can give us access to anyone, anywhere, at any time. And while that may be beneficial in some circumstances, it is important that we set digital boundaries to help us determine how often we want to engage with others through technology.

Boundaries are not meant to make you feel trapped or like you are "walking on eggshells." Boundaries help us feel comfortable, and they may even change over time. Just because you felt comfortable with something at the beginning of a relationship doesn't mean you're bound by it forever. The opposite can also be true: there may be something that you weren't okay with at the beginning of your relationship that you eventually become comfortable with. In a healthy relationship, everyone's needs and limits are respected.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING DIGITAL BOUNDARIES



*Before you talk to your partner, check in with yourself by using the following questions to help you decide what you are comfortable with:*

- What are your preferred methods of communication (phone calls, texting, FaceTime, etc...)?
- Do you have limits on how many hours a day you spend on your phone? Are there times during the day when you prefer not to receive any calls, online messages, or texts? (i.e. not during school hours or after you go to bed at 10 pm)
- Are you okay with tagging each other in photos or posting about the relationship publicly?
- Is it okay for your partner to follow your friends and family on social media?
- Is it okay to use each other's devices?
- Are there certain conversations you would prefer to have in person rather than through messages?

# DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

## WARNING SIGNS



If someone is making you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, it is time to think about setting a boundary with them, especially if you experience any of the following signs:

- You get knots in your stomach whenever they “cross the line” and check your phone without permission.
- You start to feel resentful of them when they comment on a post you shared.
- You feel disrespected by something they said or have done.
- You feel their expectations of you are unreasonable or inappropriate.
- You feel uncomfortable, or as though you are being pushed to do things you wouldn’t normally do, like share your location, passwords, etc.

## HOW TO SET A DIGITAL BOUNDARY



*Setting a boundary with a partner or a friend can be really challenging. That is exactly why we should practice them! Let’s say your partner wants you to unfollow certain people on social media. This makes you feel uncomfortable, so you want to set a boundary.*

- 1 Identify The Problem:** “My partner is acting jealous and trying to control who I can be friends with online. It’s my social media account and I should be able to follow who I want.”
- 2 Define The Boundary:** “I’m okay with my partner following me on social media, but I’m not okay with them controlling who I follow because I have a right to make those decisions myself.”
- 3 Express Your Boundary With an I-Statement:** “I feel frustrated when you tell me who to unfollow on social media. I would like you to respect my privacy, and trust that I would not do anything to compromise the relationship.”
- 4 Determine the consequences:** “If you continue to tell me who to unfollow, I will limit your access to my social media page so you can no longer view it.”

*And if they continue to disrespect your boundary, it may be time to consider if you still want to be in a relationship with someone who does not respect how you feel.*

# TEEN DATING ABUSE

The intentional use of a pattern of destructive behaviors by one person to exert power and control over a dating partner.



1 in 3 teens will experience an abusive dating relationship.



In Connecticut, 26% of students surveyed, reported that someone they were dating or going out with, purposely tried to control them or emotionally hurt them.



A 2021 survey found 20% of female students in CT had been forced by someone they were dating or going out with to do sexual things they did not want to do.

## FORMS/TYPES OF ABUSE

### PHYSICAL

Any use of physical force with the intent to control a partner through fear or injury.

- Restraining
- Object aggression
- Reckless driving

### VERBAL

Using words to hurt someone.

- Mocking
- Belittling
- Name calling
- Cursing
- Put downs

### EMOTIONAL

Breaking down someone's self-esteem and/or sense of self.

- Isolation
- Gaslighting/playing head games
- Blaming
- Manipulation & lying
- Jealousy

### SEXUAL

Trying to pressure or force someone to do something sexually that they do not want to do.

- Unwanted physical touch
- Refusing to use protection
- Making them feel like they "owe" them or are obligated

### DIGITAL

The use of technology or social media to intimidate, harass, bully, stalk, or threaten a partner.

- Monitors texts, emails, & DMs
- Constant texting
- Using sm & other apps to stalk
- Making humiliating post

### ECONOMIC

Preventing access to financial resources.

- Living together but refuses to pay bills
- Sabotage job to the point of firing
- Ruining credit
- Preventing pursuit of higher education

# HOW CAN I HELP MY FRIEND?

- Recognize the "red flags" and don't ignore them.
- Ask your friend about their relationships & keep the lines of communication open.
- Offer options/ask them what they want to do.
- Do not blame them for what is happening.
- Express concern for their safety.
- Offer to go with them to seek help and provide resources (See Resources Page).
- Understand that everyone reacts to trauma differently. Do not judge your friend for how they may respond to the situation.



## WHAT CAN I DO?

**If you are being abused or in an unhealthy relationship:**

- Remember your rights (to be respected, independent, safe, and happy).
- Remember that conflict and abuse are not the same things.
- Talk to someone about your relationship (friend, family member, counselor).
- Recognize that it might be too dangerous to be with your partner, even though you care about them and/or love them.
- If you decide to break up, plan the safest way to do it.

***Remember that you are not alone and it is not your fault***

# NAVIGATING SAFE ENDINGS

It can be tough sometimes to figure out when and how to end a relationship. You have probably spent a lot of time with this person and developed deep feelings for them. However, **it's important to make a decision based on your happiness, safety, and future** and not just the history you have with them. Whatever choice you make, DVCC is here to offer non-judgmental support. Check out our Navigating Safe Endings guide below. You can also schedule an appointment with one of our Youth & Family Counselors by calling the DVCC hotline at 203-588-9097.

## Before the Break-Up

### How Are You Feeling?

You may be experiencing a wide range of emotions, which can be confusing, and that's okay! It's normal to be uncertain or sad to leave, even if your relationship is abusive or unhealthy.



**Hope that the relationship can get better, especially if your partner has been promising to change.**

While unhealthy relationships can become healthier with enough time and dedication, you can only change your own behavior, not your partner's.



**Fear of feeling lonely after the break-up, especially if they have become a big part of your life.**

It's completely normal to feel lonely after a break-up, so it's important that you be gentle with yourself and take as much time as you need. It may also be helpful to talk with friends or find new activities that bring you joy.

**Fear of your partner's reaction, especially if you are concerned that they may harm you or themselves after the break-up.**

Take your fears seriously. Contact DVCC's Youth & Family Counselors who can help you create a safety plan.



**Doubt if you are making the right choice, especially if your partner is controlling and has been making most of the decisions in the relationship.**

It's okay to feel unsure if you are making the right decision. Any major change comes with uncertainty. Just remember that you are worthy of a relationship based on respect and equality.

### Relationship Check Up

Ask yourself what is prompting you to consider ending the relationship?

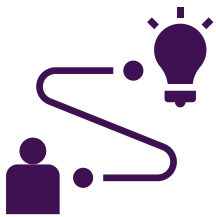
- Have you been noticing red flags or signs of abuse?
- Do you no longer feel safe emotionally and/ or physically?
- Are you unable to engage in healthy conflict?

Try writing down the reasons you want to end your relationship before doing so and keep them as a reminder for yourself later on.

# NAVIGATING SAFE ENDINGS

## During the Break-Up

The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is during and after the break-up, so if you have any concerns that your partner may have a volatile response, it is important to connect with a professional like one of DVCC Youth & Family Counselors, who can help you create a safety plan. A safety plan is a personalized strategy for breaking up with a potentially or already abusive partner.



### MAKE A PLAN & BE PREPARED

- Identify support systems like friends, family, a counselor, or a DVCC advocate, and let them know that you are ending the relationship.
- It's okay to break up over the phone if you don't feel safe doing it in person.
- If you do break up in person, try to do it in a public place. Have a trusted friend or family member wait nearby, or if that's not possible, at least let them know where you will be.
- You never have to justify a break-up; however, if you do choose to explain the reason for ending the relationship, don't feel like you have to explain it more than once. If your ex does not accept the decision or respect your boundaries, they might try to control you through pleas, guilt-tripping, threats, or insults.



### IF YOUR PARTNER THREATENS SUICIDE

- If your partner threatens suicide during a breakup, it *could* be a sign that they are trying to maintain control through emotional manipulation by making you feel guilty or afraid. Of course, someone discussing suicide should always be taken seriously.
  - **Tell Someone:** Even if they forbid you or try to swear you to secrecy, don't keep the information to yourself. Let a trusted adult or professional know so you both can get the support that you need. You might be trying to figure out whether it's a true mental health crisis or an abusive act of control. The tricky thing is, sometimes it's both, or you might not ever know. Again, this is why we must always take threats seriously and seek the help of an adult.
  - **Utilize Resources:**
    - Dial 988 for Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
    - Call 211 & press "1" for crisis
    - Text "HOME" to 741741



### REMEMBER

- Everyone's boundaries are different, so what might be okay for some may be a deal-breaker for others.
- You can break up anytime without having to justify your decision. As long as you're okay with the decision to break up, it's okay if your partner isn't.

# NAVIGATING SAFE ENDINGS

## After the Break-Up

### IT'S OKAY TO FEEL HURT

It's natural to feel hurt after a break-up, even if the relationship was unhealthy or abusive. It can feel like the whole world has turned upside down, leaving nothing but feelings of sadness, loneliness, and depression. At some point, you may even feel like leaving the relationship was the wrong decision. Just remember to be kind to yourself and take as much time as you need to heal.

### CONTINUE TO KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

The end of an unhealthy or abusive relationship doesn't necessarily mean the end of the risks you might be facing. Consider these steps after breaking up to ensure your ongoing safety:

- Talk to a trusted counselor or teacher to try and adjust your class schedule or find other ways to stay safer at school.
- Update your privacy settings on social media, and ask your friends to do the same.
- Turn off location sharing, and be mindful of tagging your location on social media.
- If your ex tries to maintain contact with your friends or family, ask them not to share any personal information about you.
- Save any threatening or harassing messages your ex sends.
- Keep trusted friends or family members nearby when attending parties or events that you think your ex might attend.
- If your ex does come to your home when you're alone, don't answer the door.

### TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

It takes a lot of courage to end a relationship, so be proud of yourself for doing what's best for you. Take this time to explore your independence and pursue new opportunities and interests that bring you joy.

- Continue to lean on your support system which can help you feel safer and more confident.
- If you don't feel comfortable talking about the break-up with others, try journaling instead.
- Practicing self-care looks different for everyone. Check out this [link](#), to customize your own self-care plan today.



# Domestic Violence Crisis Center



## Teen Advisory Board

DVCC's Teen Advisory Board is committed to transforming communities by equipping young people with the knowledge and tools to build healthy relationships and lead safer lives.

### Educate



Teens will provide education and resources to their peers, equipping them with the skills needed to foster healthy relationships and recognize the signs of unhealthy relationships.

### Empower



Teens will develop leadership skills, self-confidence, and a sense of agency as they advocate for positive change in their school and the greater community.

### Support



Teens will have a safe place to share and access resources, as well as support individuals impacted by relationship abuse through volunteering, donation drives, and awareness events.

For more information, visit  
[www.dvcct.org](http://www.dvcct.org)



To sign up, email  
[nellis@dvcct.org](mailto:nellis@dvcct.org) or  
[lfilardi@dvcct.org](mailto:lfilardi@dvcct.org)



# TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH BOOKLIST

***Always Forever Maybe* by Anica Mrose Rissi** When Betts meets Aiden at the candy store where she works, their connection is like a sugar rush to the heart. Betts already knows the two of them are infinite. Inevitable. Destined to become an us. Betts has only ever kept one secret from her best friend, Jo, but suddenly there's a long list of things she won't tell her, things Jo wouldn't understand. Because Jo doesn't see how good Aiden is for Betts. She finds him needy. Possessive. Controlling. She's wrong. With a love like this, nothing else matters.

***And We Call It Love* by Amanda Vink** Clare and Zari are best friends. They write music together, go everywhere together, and they know everything about each other. At least they did before Zari started dating Dion. The more Zari falls for Dion, the less she has time for anything else. At first, Clare chalks it up to a new and exciting relationship, and she tries to be happy for her friend despite her loneliness. When Zari starts to show up to school with half-hidden bruises, Clare knows there's something darker about this relationship that has to be stopped.

***Asking For It* by Shannon Kennedy** In this award-winning story, Sarah Flynn's fondest desires come true when she makes the varsity cheer squad at Stewart Falls Academy. And wonder of wonders, her dream guy, Jason Phillips, the football captain, finally has time for her. He claims to "love" her as much as she adores him. However, things aren't as perfect as they seem. No matter how hard she tries, she can't make him happy. As the days go by it grows harder and harder to explain her constant injuries. She knows she shouldn't be battered by someone who supposedly cares about her, but how can she change Jason? And more importantly, can she get out of this relationship alive?

***Bad Boy* by Dream Jones** Devastated to find herself back in a group home after a peaceful year of living with loving foster parents, a Brooklyn teenager striving to become strong and independent soon falls prey to the dangerous affections of a good-looking but shady young man.

***Bad Romance* by Heather Demetrios** Grace wants out. Out of her house, where her stepfather wields fear like a weapon and her mother makes her scrub imaginary dirt off the floors. Out of her California town, too small to contain her big-city dreams. Out of her life, and into the role of Parisian artist, New York director—anything but scared and alone. Enter Gavin: charming, talented, adored. Controlling. Dangerous. When Grace and Gavin fall in love, Grace is sure it's too good to be true. She has no idea their relationship will become a prison she's unable to escape. A deeply affecting and unflinchingly honest portrayal of a destructive relationship, *Bad Romance* is a young adult novel about spiraling into darkness—and emerging into the light again.

***Bitter End* by Jennifer Brown** When seventeen-year-old Alex starts dating Cole, a new boy at her high school, her two closest friends increasingly mistrust him as the relationship grows more serious.

***Breaking Beautiful* by Jennifer Shaw** Wolf Allie is overwhelmed when her boyfriend, Trip, dies in a car accident, leaving her scarred and unable to recall what happened that night, but she feels she must uncover the truth, even if it could hurt the people who tried to save her from Trip's abuse.

***Break From You* by Rebecca Green** Gasper Brooke Myers wants to believe she has it all: the perfect guy, the perfect relationship, the perfect life. She wants to believe it so much that she's willing to overlook the fear, the isolation, and the pain her boyfriend has caused her. She knows it isn't right but tells herself that love isn't always easy. However, when a fire destroys the restaurant during homecoming dinner, she forms an instant bond with the boy who saves her, one her boyfriend wouldn't like. With the pain of a concussion reminding her of how bad things can get, she is forced to re-evaluate the relationship she has with her boyfriend and face the ghosts that haunt her. Brooke once believed love was all it took...but is it enough? Is it truly love when you've lost yourself in it?

***Breathing Underwater* by Alex Flinn** Sent to counseling for hitting his girlfriend, Caitlin, and ordered to keep a journal, sixteen-year-old Nick recounts his relationship with Caitlin, examines his controlling behavior and anger, and describes living with his abusive father.

***But I Love Him* by Amanda Grace** Traces, through the course of a year, Ann's transformation from a happy A-student, track star, and popular senior to a solitary, abused woman whose love for the emotionally-scarred Connor has taken away everything—even herself.

***Criminal* by Terra Elan McVoy** This is the story of 18-year-old Nikki. She comes from an unstable home and tends to make bad choices, like dating a suspicious guy named Dee, who ropes her into more ill-fated decisions. She falls into the trap of telling herself it's "all for love," even when Dee convinces her to help commit a crime that ends in murder. The overall themes here are coercive control and emotional abuse, two things that are important to talk about as they're less recognizable forms of dating violence than outright physical abuse.

***Crush* by Eve-Ainsworth** Love hurts ... but should it hurt this much? Reeling from her mum's sudden departure, Anna finds the comfort she needs in her blossoming relationship with Will. He's handsome and loving, everything Anna has always dreamt of. He's also moody and unpredictable, pushing her away from her friends and her music. He wants her to be his and his alone. He wants her to be perfect. Anna's world is closing in. But threatening everything is a dark secret that not even Will can control... Eve Ainsworth's gripping second novel is a pitch-perfect exploration of love at its most powerful, addictive, and destructive.

***Dark Song* by Gail Giles** After her father loses his job and she finds out that her parents have lied to her, fifteen-year-old Ames feels betrayed enough to become involved with a criminal who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

***Dreamland* by Sarah Dessen** After her older sister runs away, sixteen-year-old Caitlin decides that she needs to make a major change in her own life and begins an abusive relationship with a boy who is mysterious, brilliant, and dangerous.

***Die for You* by Amy Fellner** Dominy Emma has it all going for her—she's about to start college and she's been given an opportunity to go to Rome for a yearlong internship. But her boyfriend, Dillon, isn't crazy about that idea. His increasingly menacing behavior escalates into physical violence and extreme possession, forcing Emma to make choices she's not even close to ready for. While the book does a good job of covering important topics like psychological and physical abuse, it does seem to imply, in certain points, that Emma's internship is the catalyst for the abuse starting, when abusers are going to abuse no matter what the circumstances. This is an important fact for teens to take note of—the abuse is never the survivor's fault; it is always the choice of the abuser.

***Falling For You* by Lisa Schroeder** Rae's new boyfriend seems like the perfect guy until jealousy grows into obsession.

***Fingerprints* by Suzanne Casamento** When her mother remarries and their house is invaded by her new stepbrother and stepsister, Savanna is extra grateful for her amazing boyfriend, David. But as his thoughtful ways become increasingly controlling, Savanna seeks help from her mom, only to find that she's too wrapped up in her new family to care. Left to deal with an abuser on her own, Savanna turns to her best friends, Jane and Tally, for help. What was supposed to be a fun summer for the three best friends turns into a series of twists to break free from a stalker.

***I Hold Your Heart* by Karen Gregory** When Gemma meets Aaron, she feels truly seen for the first time. Their love story is the intense kind. The written-in-the-stars, excluding-all-others kind. The kind you write songs about. But little by little their relationship takes over Gemma's life. What happens when being seen becomes being watched, and care becomes control? Told in both Gemma's and Aaron's words, this is a raw, moving exploration of gaslighting in teenage relationships that skewers our ideas of what love looks like.

***Inexcusable* by Chris Lynch** Keir loves his girlfriend, but she says he's done something unforgivable. Something he thinks he'd never do. But could she be telling the truth?

***It Ends with Us* by Colleen Hoover** is the story of Lily who witnessed her mother getting abused by her father all her life and feeling helpless to do anything about it. Determined to live her life on her terms, she moves to Boston and it is here that she meets Dr. Ryle Kincaid. Charismatic, suave and decadently handsome, he is a man who looks like he stepped straight out of a men's magazine. Life is good, too good but then one incident leaves this perfection of a life in pieces. Faced with heartbreaking situations and hard decisions, Lily has to decide if *It Ends with Us*.

***Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* by Mariko Tamaki** is a graphic novel that looks at young love and what happens when one partner questions the healthiness of their relationship and discerns who or what needs to change.

***Lily & Taylor* by Elise Moser** From the opening moments when Taylor witnesses her sister's autopsy to the final cathartic scene after the two girls have survived their ordeal, the reader is glued to every page of this frank, gripping, and beautifully written novel that raises questions for every teenager. Do you need to be a certain way to get a boyfriend? Can someone who loves you also hurt you? How can a million small compromises eat away at who you are? What happens when you don't think you deserve to be treated well? How do you end up in an abusive relationship, and what keeps you there? Elise Moser goes deeply into the hearts and minds of Lily and Taylor, who in the end save each other in unexpected ways.

***Rage: A Love Story* by Julie Anne Peters** At the end of high school, Johanna finally begins dating the girl she has loved from afar, but Reeve is as much trouble as she claims to be as she and her twin brother damage Johanna's self-esteem, friendships, and already precarious relationship with her sister.

***Say What You Will* by Cammie McGovern Even** if love itself doesn't last forever, it can leave us changed for the better. Amy was born with cerebral palsy; at school, she needs a walker, a voice box — and an adult aide. When she meets Matthew, a fellow high-school student who struggles with OCD, he argues that she's spent years keeping herself separate from her peers and dares her to use a student aide instead. In return, she challenges him to be that aide — and to start working to overcome his obsession and compulsions. As they push one another, and their bond grows, they realize that their friendship is becoming something deeper. And whether or not their love is forever, the changes they're urging one another to make will be.

***Shattered* by Sarah N. Harvey** After March shoves her boyfriend and he ends up in a coma, she tries to figure out what it means to have a perfect life.

***So Much It Hurts* by Monique Polak** A teen actress gets involved with an older director, whose explosive temper and controlling behavior threatens to destroy her life.

**Sparrow by Mary Cecilia Jackson** Sparrow has always believed that her lifelong creed, "I'm not the kind of girl who tells", will make her just like everyone else: Normal. Happy. Safe. But in the aftermath of a brutal assault by her seemingly perfect boyfriend, Tristan, Sparrow must finally find the courage to confront the ghosts of her past or lose herself forever.

**Stalker Girl by Rosemary Graham** During a difficult time in her life, when her mother and stepfather have broken up and her father cancels a trip she has been anticipating, Carly becomes obsessed with her ex-boyfriend's new girlfriend.

**Stay by Deb Caletti** In a remote corner of Washington State where she and her father have gone to escape her obsessive boyfriend, Clara meets two brothers who captain a sailboat, a lighthouse keeper with a secret, and an old friend of her father who knows his secrets.

**Teenage Love Affair by Ni-Ni Simone** Seventeen-year-old Zsa-Zsa is torn between her current boyfriend who is abusive and her first love, Malachi.

**The Girl Who Fell by S.M. Parker** Themes of jealousy, possession, and isolation infiltrate Parker's debut novel about high school senior Zephyr, who falls for the dangerous newcomer, Alec. Once again, the main character continues to justify Alec's power and control tactics as "love," and she is quickly over her head both emotionally and sexually with her new boyfriend. While the book reads a bit more like a suspenseful horror novel than a cautionary tale about dating violence, this may be what makes it more appealing to the high school crowd. It still highlights plenty of important themes surrounding dating violence, especially how easily an abuser can infiltrate someone's life without any overt warning signs.

**The Things You Kiss Goodbye by Connor Leslie** Bettina is thrilled when her strict Greek American dad allows her to start dating, but things take an unexpected turn when her boyfriend becomes possessive and abusive.

**Things Change by Patrick Jones** Sixteen-year-old Johanna, one of the best students in her class, develops a passionate attachment for troubled seventeen-year-old Paul and finds her plans for the future changing in unexpected ways.

**The Places I Cried in Public by Holly Bourne** Amelie loved Reese. And she thought he loved her. But she's starting to realize love isn't supposed to hurt like this. So now she's retracing their story and untangling what happened by revisiting all the places he made her cry. Because if she works out what went wrong, perhaps she can finally learn to get over him.

**What Kind of Girl by Alyssa B. Sheinmel** The girls at North Bay Academy are taking sides. It all started when Mike Parker's girlfriend showed up with a bruise on her face. Or, more specifically, when she walked into the principal's office and said Mike hit her. But her classmates have questions. Why did she go to the principal and not the police? Why did she stay with Mike if he was hurting her? Obviously, if it's true, Mike should face the consequences. But is it true? Some girls want to rally for Mike's expulsion—and some want to rally around Mike. As rumors about what really happened spread, the North Bay Academy students will question what it means to be guilty or innocent, right or wrong.





# Movie Discussion Guide

## ***It Ends With Us***

Based on the 2016 novel by Colleen Hoover, this film follows florist Lily Bloom whose troubled relationship with neurosurgeon Ryle Kincaid is compounded when her high school sweetheart Atlas Corrigan re-enters her life.

- Lily and Ryle's relationship does not start out abusive, but becomes unhealthy overtime. What are some "red flags" or unhealthy behaviors that you noticed throughout the film?
- How does Lily's relationship with Atlas differ from her relationship with Ryle? What are some "green flags", or healthy behaviors displayed by Atlas?
- After Ryle pushes Lily down the stairs, we see him tending to Lily's injuries. Why do you think Ryle chose to take care of Lily's injuries himself, rather than taking her to the hospital or calling an ambulance?
- It takes time for Lily to end her relationship with Ryle. When Lily asks her mother why she stayed with her father, her mother responds, "It would have been harder to leave, and I loved him." What are some reasons someone might stay in an abusive relationship?
- Lily witnesses abuse in her parents' relationship. How might her childhood experiences shape her future relationships? What is the significance behind the title, "It Ends With Us"?

## ***10 Things I Hate About You***

A high-school boy, Cameron, cannot date Bianca until her anti-social older sister, Kat, has a boyfriend. So, Cameron pays a mysterious boy, Patrick, to charm Kat.

- Patrick attempts to win Kat back by hiring the marching band and publicly serenading her. How would you feel if someone did this in real life? Would it feel romantic or like they were crossing a boundary?
- Patrick initially pursues Kat because Cameron paid him; however, eventually, he falls in love. If someone lied to you as a means to get in a relationship, would you be able to forgive them and continue dating them?
- Instead of apologizing for lying, Patrick buys Kat a guitar. Kat replies. Would gift giving or grand gestures be enough to forgive someone or would you prefer an apology and taking accountability?
- Though released in 1999, this movie has recently regained popularity. If it were remade today, what parts of the movie do you think would change?

## ***To All the Boys I Loved Before***

Lara Jean Covey, finds herself in a fake relationship, after her secret love letters are accidentally mailed out to her past crushes.

- Why do you think Lara Jean & Margot's mother told them that they shouldn't start college with a boyfriend?
- In the movie, Lara Jean kisses Peter Kavinsky in front of Josh to avoid talking to him about the love letter. Do you think it was okay that she forcibly kissed Peter in front of everyone? Do you think the audience would have a different reaction if the gender roles were reversed?
- Peter suggests that Lara Jean and he should pretend to date so that he can get back together with Gen by making her jealous. How do you think Gen would feel if she knew Peter was manipulating her emotions so that she would fall for him again? Do you think that is a healthy thing to do in a relationship?
- After Lara Jean agrees to the fake relationship, she sits down with Peter to create a contract because she says, "It's important to know where we stand on certain issues." This is a great example of setting boundaries or personal limits in a relationship, and though theirs was not real, can you think of any boundaries that you would want to set in a real relationship?
- In the final scene, Lara Jean asks Peter, "What do you put in a contract for a real relationship?" Peter replies by saying, "Nothing, you gotta trust." Do you think there is anything else important to a healthy relationship besides trust?

## ***Sierra Burgess is a Loser***

Sierra Burgess is a socially awkward high school senior who struggles with her self-image. When a popular boy named Jamey mistakenly texts her, thinking she's another girl, Sierra decides to keep up the charade.

- Sierra "catfishing" Jamey by pretending to be Veronica ; however, after discovering Sierra's real identity, Jamey still takes her to the dance. If this movie took place in the real life, do you think it would have the same ending?
- During the film, Jamey thinks he is kissing Veronica, but it's really Sierra. How do you think Jamey would feel if he knew he was tricked into kissing someone else?
- Even though Sierra isn't dating Jamey, she forbids Veronica from kissing him. Do you think she had a right to do that? How else did Sierra act jealous?
- In Sierra's song, "Sunflower," she expresses her insecurities by explaining how she is not conventionally beautiful and out of Jamey's league. Do you think her feeling that way made it okay to lie to Jamey?
- Do you think it is possible to build a healthy relationship when it begins with a person being dishonest?



# Movie Discussion Guide

## ***General Discussion Questions for Any Movie/TV Show***

Didn't watch these movies? That's OK! Any movie or TV show can be used to start a conversation about healthy and unhealthy relationships. Below, are some general questions to ask, to help you look at any form of media through a more critical lens.

- If you have seen this movie/ show before, did you notice anything different this time?
- What do you think of the movie/ show's overall message? Do you agree with it?
- Did any relationship dynamic make you feel uncomfortable? If so, which scenes and why did it make you feel this way?
- What kind of relationships did the character have? Do you think they were healthy or unhealthy? Explain why.
- Could you identify red flags or unhealthy behaviors within a character's relationship?

## ***Unhealthy Romantic Tropes in Movies & TV***

A movie trope is a commonly used theme, plot device, character type, or scenario that appears frequently in films across different genres. These recurring elements are recognizable, and audiences often expect to see them. Have you noticed any of these tropes? What are some other unhealthy romantic tropes you have seen in movies and TV?

- Stalking someone is romantic
- Love at first sight
- Enemies to lovers
- No doesn't mean no, it means try harder
- Grand, public gestures declaring love or asking for forgiveness
- Changing your appearance is necessary to get the love interest
- It's okay to lie, cheat, or ruin other relationships as long as there is a happy ending





# RESOURCES

## Domestic Violence Crisis Center



### Stamford Office & Mailing Address

1111 Summer St., Suite 203  
Stamford, CT 06905



### Main Business Line:

203-588-9100

### DVCC 24/7 Hotline:

203-588-9097



### Norwalk Office

5 Eversely Ave., Suite 201  
Norwalk, CT 06851

### CT Safe Connect Hotline:

888-774-2900 (call/text)



[www.dvccct.org](http://www.dvccct.org)

Serving the communities of  
Stamford, Norwalk, Darien,  
New Canaan, Weston,  
Westport, and Wilton.



[nellis@dvccct.org](mailto:nellis@dvccct.org)

[lfilardi@dvccct.org](mailto:lfilardi@dvccct.org)

Youth & Family Counselors available to support teens and youth.

## Social Media

Fill your feed with information, support, and positivity!



### Instagram

@dvccct  
@join1love  
@loveisrespectofficial



### TikTok

@join1love  
@loveisrespectofficial



# RESOURCES

## Anti-Violence Project

Counseling & advocacy organization for LGBTQ+ victims of violence.

**[www.avp.org](http://www.avp.org)**

**Hotline: 212-714-1141**

## One Love Foundation

An organization empowering young people with the tools and resources they need to see the signs of healthy & unhealthy relationships.

**[www.joinonelove.org](http://www.joinonelove.org)**

## Break The Cycle

An organization focused on educating & empowering young people to create healthy, thriving relationships. Find support & information for every stage of a relationship.

**[www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)**

## Recognize Violence, Change Culture

Resources, activities, & other creative materials for tabling and outreach events.

**[www.joinrvcc.org](http://www.joinrvcc.org)**

## Love Is Respect

Live interactive chat support & safety planning.

**[www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)**

**Hotline: 1-866-331-9474**

**Text: "loveis" to 22522**

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

Learn more about relationship abuse, safety planning, & supporting others. Support is free, confidential, & available 24/7.

**[www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)**

**Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

**Text: "START" to 88788**