



Your Most Trusted Resource  
for Life's Relationships

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Red Flags Warn of Dating Violence October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

It is reported in the United States that one in three teenagers will experience dating violence before they leave high school. Dating violence does not discriminate: all races, all socioeconomic classes, and both genders are affected. Dating violence is defined as "the perpetration or threat of an act of violence by at least one member of an unmarried couple on the other member within the context of dating or courtship" according to the United States Department of Justice.

So what exactly does dating violence look like? Dating violence or abuse can come in a variety of forms: physical, verbal, sexual, and/or emotional abuse. Most of the time, warning signs or red flags provide clues to what may develop into a violent situation. The first flag to watch for is control and/or manipulation. If you seem to be acting less and less like yourself or your friends are noticing personality changes, you may be in a relationship that is heading towards violence. Another red flag is when your partner dictates what you wear, what you eat; who you hang out with, or where you go. A common red flag that your relationship is heading toward violence is when you don't feel you have a right to leave your partner. For instance, if you are arguing and your partner tries to block your ability to exit a room or get out of a car that is a boundary violation and could escalate into violence. Physical violence such as hitting, throwing things, grabbing, punching, biting, scratching, kicking, or slapping are examples of dating violence. These red flags are never ending cycles of abuse; apologies met with yet another act of violence. This addictive cycle is dangerous and can be fatal.

If you find yourself or a loved one in a violent or abusive situation, there are many things you can do to reach out for help:

- Tell a trusted friend or adult.
- Become educated on the topic. There are hundreds of resources online that can help identify whether or not a relationship is abusive.
- Listen to your family and friends. If your loved ones tell you they are concerned about your relationship, listen to them. They might be seeing warning signs you cannot.
- Contact the Teen Dating Abuse Hotline at 1-866-331-9474 or a community professional.

**You DO NOT have to go through this alone- help is available!**

Chelsie Sargent, M.Ed., LPC, CART, is a counselor at Shield-Bearer Counseling Centers who provided Dating Violence Prevention programs to over 15,000 students last school year. Upcoming presentation dates in the Greater Houston area include: November 10, 2010, December 12, 2010 and February 16, 2011

Call Roy at 281.894.7222 to observe a live presentation. Learn more about Chelsie and Shield-Bearer, a 501c3 charity, at [FightingForHearts.Org](http://FightingForHearts.Org).