



TEEN DATING VIOLENCE



# Dynamics of Teen Dating Violence

This project was supported by grant 2018-TA-AX-K033 awarded by the office on violence against women, U.S. Department of justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of justice, office on violence against women.



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES



Maureen Reid, MSW



D Dagondon Tieg,  
Bilingual Social Change  
Associate, Idaho Coalition  
Against Sexual and  
Domestic Violence

# Welcome and Introductions

# Ground Rules

---

Goal = Safe space for discussion and sharing of ideas.

- Mutual respect
- Listening with curiosity, balancing with speaking
- Asking questions
- Assuming goodwill, recognizing impact
- Being physically present throughout meeting and giving full attention
- Respecting confidentiality
- Language and institute focus

# Dynamics Learning Objectives

---

As a result of this webinar, you will be better able to:

- Identify the dynamics of teen dating violence, including the impact of gender, role of peers, motivation for using violence, and the short and long term impacts of trauma.
- Define adolescence and describe the impact of brain development and environmental factors on adolescent behaviors, particularly in cases of teen dating violence.
- Differentiate teen dating violence from adult relationship violence.



## What makes a healthy dating relationship?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

slido



**What are red flags in a dating relationship?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Dating is defined as

---

- Two (or possibly more than two) people in an intimate relationship
- The relationship may be sexual but does not have to be
- The relationship may be serious or casual, straight or gay, monogamous, non-monogamous, or polyamorous, short-term or long-term.

# Signs of a Healthy Relationship

---

- Giving each other space to hang out with friends and family
- Being okay with disagreement
- Respecting physical boundaries
- Remaining in control of personal choices
- Exhibiting healthy texting behavior (not excessive or abusive)



# Teen Dating Violence (TDV)

---

Is defined as the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship, including stalking. It can occur in person or electronically and might occur between a current or former dating partner.

(Center for Disease Control, Division of Violence Prevention)

# Multiple Dimensions of Abuse

---

Physical abuse is only one dimension:

- Sexual violence
- Emotional/verbal abuse
- Isolation
- Intimidation
- Stalking
- Digital abuse

# TDV Statistics

---

**1 in 5 teens** report physical dating violence and **1 in 10** report sexual dating violence.

**1 in 3 high schools students** who dated in the past year were physically or sexually abused, or both, by someone they dated.

Nearly **1 in 5 women** and **1 in 7 men** who have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner, first experienced dating violence between age 11 and age 17.

# TDV Prevalence

---

Prevalent amongst teens with:

- peers who endorse dating violence as the norm,
- an invalidating school and family environment,
- exposure to negative media portrayal of relationships, and
- environments where there is a general disbelief about teen dating violence.

slido



**How is TDV different from  
adult relationship violence?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Teens Tend to Stay in Violent Relationships

---

- About half of teens indicate that they would terminate a relationship following a violent act
- For many youth, dating violence does not indicate a dating relationship should end

# Context is Important for How Teens See Dating Violence

---

2006 research in Canadian high schools revealed that girls and boys both placed great emphasis on context when deciding if an action was abusive:

- Boys felt that if an action was done without the intention to harm, it was not abusive.
- Girls believed that intention does not matter if the person feels harmed.

(Sears, Byers, Whelan and Saint-Pierre)

# Different Reasons for Behaviors

---

Girls and boys engage in abusive behaviors for different reasons and with different consequences:

- Jealousy as a common motivator.
- Girls likely to use aggression to express anger or emotional hurt, to tease, and to fight back against partner's aggression.
- Boys more likely to use aggression to gain control over partner or as retaliation for being hit.
- Female victims more likely to express fear, anxiety, hurt, or express a desire to leave the situation.



# Gender Differences

---

- Young women are more likely to minimize or ignore their partner's violence;
- Young men may draw attention to their victimization.
- Girls are more likely to be forced into sexual activity.

# Gender Considerations

---

Dating violence among LGBTQ+ youth occurs at significantly higher rates than among their non-LGBTQ+ peers.

The rates of sexual victimization for LGBTQ+ were nearly double that of their peers.

Transgender youth reported the highest rates of physical dating violence at 88.9%.

Dank M, Lachman P, Zweig, J, & Yahner J. 2010 "Dating Violence Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth." Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/23946/412892-Dating-Violence-Experiences-of-Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-and-Transgender-Youth.PDF>

# Relationship Spectrum

---

## Healthy

A healthy relationship means both you and your partner are:

- Communicating
- Respectful
- Trusting
- Honest
- Equal
- Enjoying personal time away from each other
- Making mutual choices
- Economic/financial partners

## Unhealthy

You may be in an unhealthy relationship if your partner is:

- Not communicating
- Disrespectful
- Not trusting
- Dishonest
- Trying to take control
- Only spending time together
- Pressured into activities
- Unequal economically

## Abusive

Abuse is occurring in a relationship when one partner is:

- Communicating in a hurtful or threatening way
- Mistreating
- Accusing the other of cheating when it's untrue
- Denying their actions are abusive
- Controlling
- Isolating their partner from others

# Intersection of Bullying and Teen Dating Violence

---

- Teen Dating Violence can be **misidentified** as bullying, especially among younger adolescents
- Cumulative trauma for victims
- Cumulative trauma for juvenile offenders
- Peer group bullying due to cooperation with criminal justice
- Bullying as part of extended power and control of Teen Dating Violence

# Adolescent Development (1 of 2)

---

## Descendants Clip



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0O1u5OEc5eY>

slido



**What makes a teen vulnerable to dating violence?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Adolescent Development (2 of 2)

---

Children and adolescents are still developing in ways that are relevant to culpability and mitigation:

- Biologically (brain development)
- Cognitively (reasoning and problem-solving)
- Psychosocially (peer pressure, risk taking, impact of time)

# Early Brain Development

---

- Brains develop in a predictable way
- Based on experience (“use it or lose it”)
- Importance of relationships
- Sets stage for future development



# Adolescent Brain Development

---

Brains develop from the bottom up – saves the best for last!

Prefrontal cortex – growth spurt around 9 or 10 then pruning process starts around age 11

As teens mature their brains become faster, sharper and more specialized

Amazing capacity for learning – more trouble with prioritization and organization

Teen brains need more sleep!

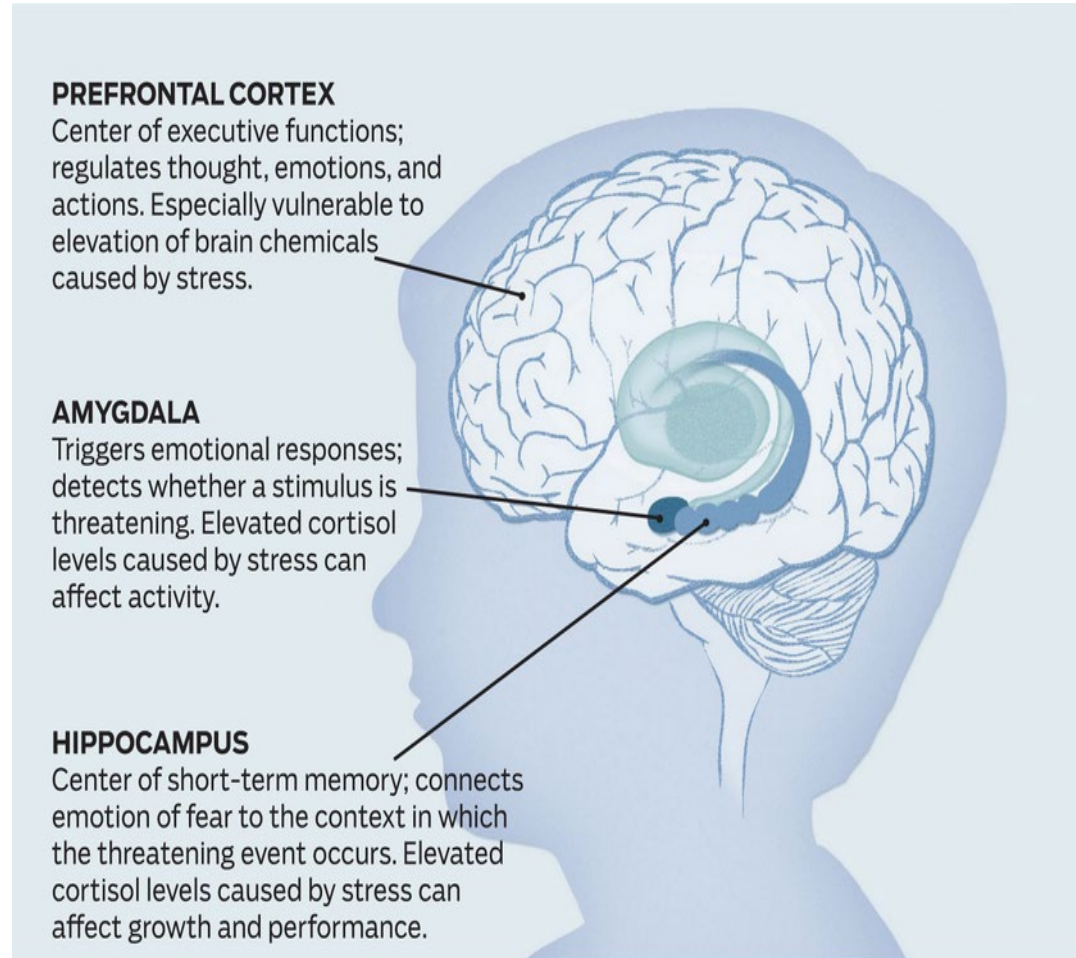
## UPSTAIRS BRAIN

→ Thinking,  
reasoning,  
language

## DOWNSTAIRS BRAIN

→ Fight, Flight  
Freeze  
Response

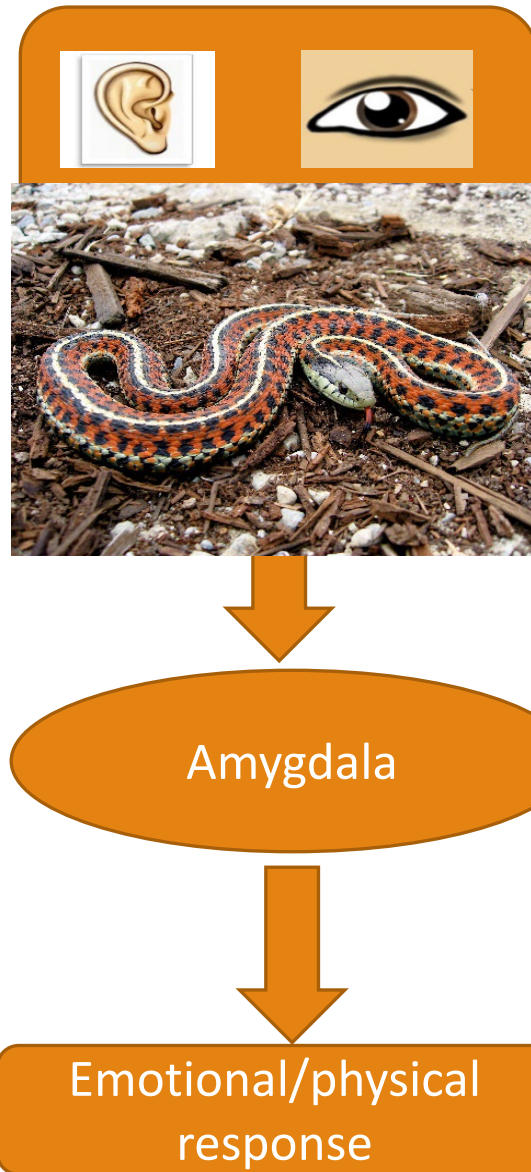
→ Holds fear  
memories in  
relation to  
context



“Violence, Stress and a Child’s Brain”

[www.baltimoresun.com](http://www.baltimoresun.com)

# The Amygdala



# Teen Brain Development Facts

---

- Teens process information differently than adults
- Adults rely on frontal lobes (reasoning and language) to response to situations, adolescents rely more on the amygdala
  - More emotion (“drama”), more difficulty finding words
  - Teenage brains are particularly vulnerable to stress

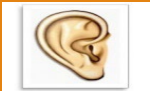
# The Amygdala: Our Fight, Flight, and Freeze Centre

---

What this looks like:

| FLIGHT  | FIGHT  | FREEZE  |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Withdrawing</li><li>▪ Fleeing</li><li>▪ Skipping class</li><li>▪ Daydreaming</li><li>▪ Seeming to sleep</li><li>▪ Avoiding others</li><li>▪ Hiding or wandering</li><li>▪ Becoming disengaged</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Acting out</li><li>▪ Behaving aggressively</li><li>▪ Acting silly</li><li>▪ Easily frustrated</li><li>▪ Defiant behavior</li><li>▪ Hyperactivity</li><li>▪ Arguing</li><li>▪ Screaming/yelling</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Exhibiting numbness</li><li>▪ Refusing to answer</li><li>▪ Refusing to get needs met</li><li>▪ Giving a blank look</li><li>▪ Feeling unable to move</li></ul> |

# The Hippocampus



Amygdala

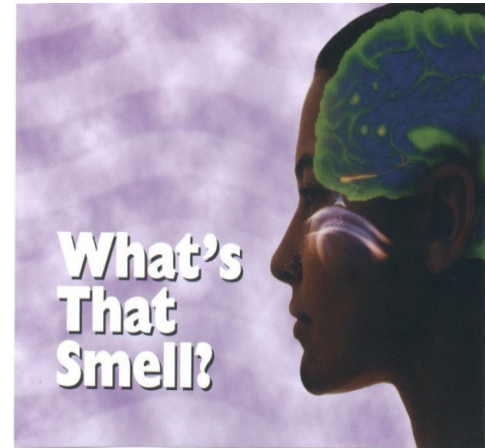


Emotional/physical response



Those loud, chaotic noises remind me of home...

Playing touch football just doesn't feel right...



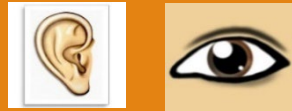
# Teen Brain Development Facts I

---

- Gender differences in brain development
- Overall girls brains develop earlier during adolescence
- In general, In general, hippocampus grows faster and larger in young women – may lead to improved ability to size up social situations, be emotionally supportive, and coordinator complex relationships
- In general, boys have busier and bigger amygdalae – may explain physical busy-ness and risk taking
- Important to understand the difference between population level patterns and individual difference!

Linda Chamberlain, The Amazing Adolescent Brain

# The Prefrontal Cortex



Feared  
Stimulus





# Teen Brain Development Facts II

---

- Teens growing up in fear and chaos tend to spend more time in the 'survival brain' trying to feel okay rather than in activities that develop their pre-frontal cortex
- They adapt to their environment, but at a cost



## Amygdala and Hippocampus



- Fast, relayed through the senses
- Thanks to the Hippocampus – has an incredible memory for contexts of situations
  - Can over-ride the Prefrontal Cortex
  - You need to activate to generate – learns through experience
  - Self-regulation through sensory experience and physiological strategies works best when activated

## Pre-Frontal Cortex



- Used best if Amygdala is not fully activated
- Under extreme stress, PFC not very activated
  - Replace because you can't erase – can't tell yourself not to think about something – you need to replace the through with something else
  - Teaching self-regulation strategies through logic or arguments works best when Amygdala not very activated

# Brain research cannot:

Tell us  
where to  
draw the  
line  
between  
adolescence  
and  
adulthood

Distinguish  
between  
mature &  
immature  
individuals

Distinguish  
guilt from  
mitigating  
factors

Predict  
recidivism

# Trauma and TDV

---

# When does an event become traumatic?

---

It is the absence of or limited resources available to help a child respond to the stressful or traumatic situation, manage and return to a sense of calmness and control (Susan Craig, 2016)

# How does stress relate to performance?

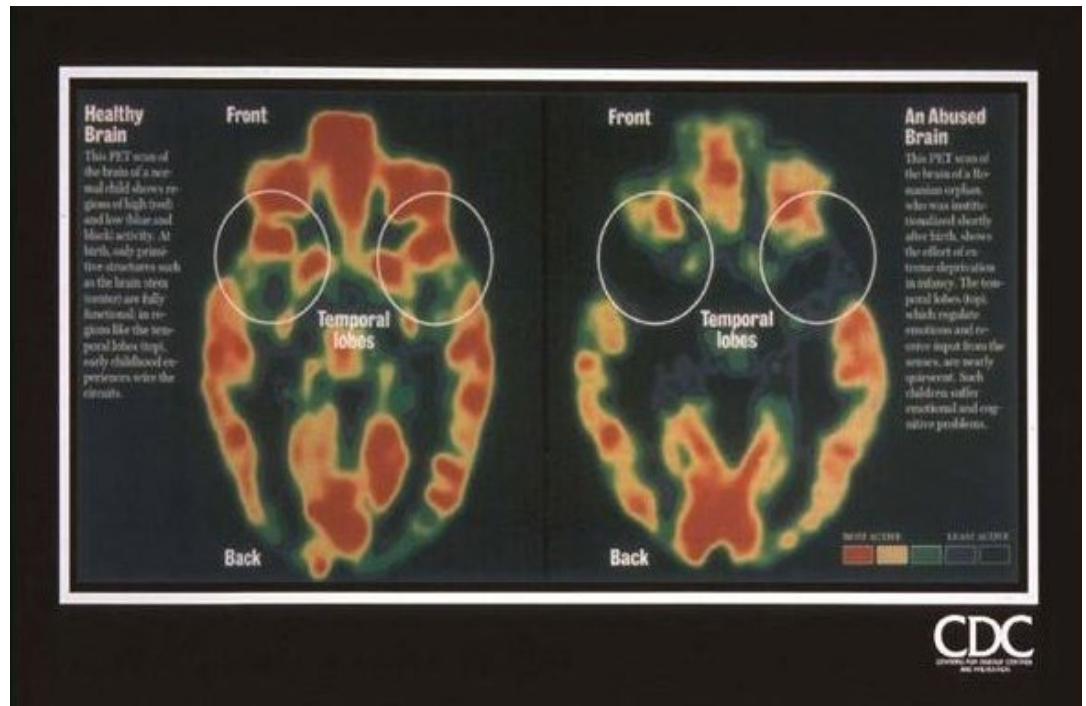
---



# Impacts of Stress and Trauma on the Brain



The more adverse events or traumatic experiences a child encounters, the greater likelihood they will experience negative health and mental health outcomes.





# What is toxic stress?

---

6 year old girl living in suburbs

Same 6-year old girl struggling with family poverty

Same 6- year old minority girl, parental addiction, abuse, frequent moves



Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

# Why are trauma sensitive settings needed?

---

Children bring their experiences of trauma and toxic stress everywhere they go

Because we don't necessarily know who they are...

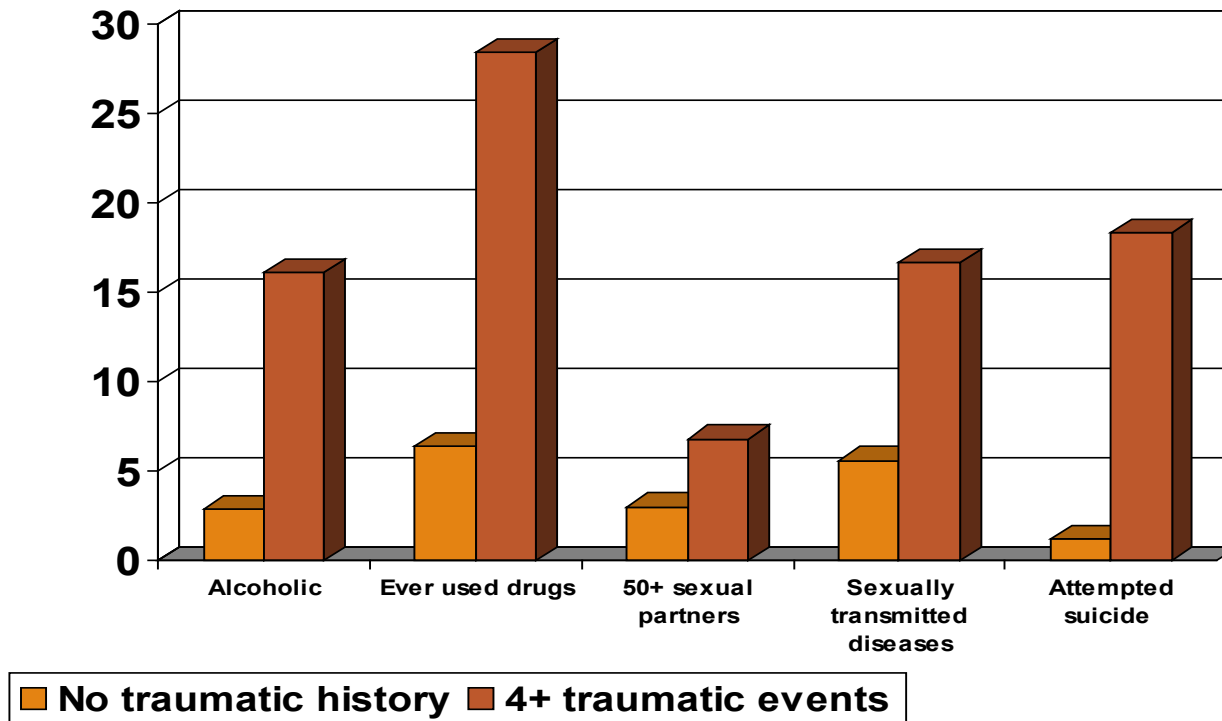
# Prevalence Levels Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

---

- Many victims of adolescent relationship abuse have also been exposed to violence and substance abuse in their homes.
- Coexisting adversities increase the likelihood of negative outcomes.
  - Trauma symptoms
  - Substance abuse in adolescence
  - Maltreatment in childhood
  - Exposure to Domestic Violence or Teen Dating Violence
  - Early sexual activity\multiple sexual partners

# Long Term Impact of Trauma in Childhood: ACE Study

---



Feletti et al., 1998

# Strategies

---

# Communication Strategies

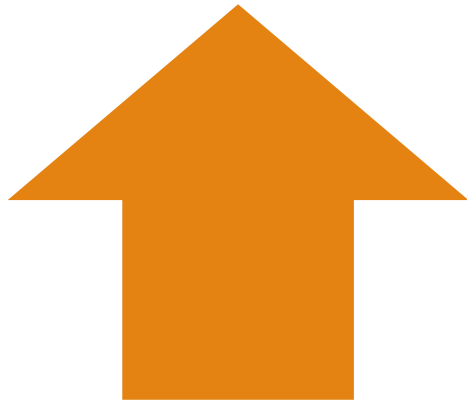
---

Knowing what we know about adolescent development:

- Don't ask questions that begin with "why?" Instead ask teenager to recount their behavior to you.
- Keep it simple; don't ask questions that contain more than one concept.
- Allow the adolescent time to take in and retain new information.

# How Should a Judge Respond?

---



Judges must place adolescents' actions in context of their development and environment



May not excuse, but may mitigate punishment & frame intervention. Immature juveniles will almost always grow into mature, law-abiding adults.

# Best Practices for Teen Dating Violence Programs

---

Best Principles for Program Design for Youth Involved in Relationship Violence:

- Comprehensive programming
- Skills-based approach
- A relationship focus
- Health promotion/harm reduction framework

Best Prevention Programs are sensitive to many spheres in which adolescents live:

- Peers, Family, School, Culture, Society
- Adolescent Risk Behaviors
  - Fourth R Curriculum
  - Safe Dates Curriculum



slido



**What is one thing you can do  
as a result of this webinar?**

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Wrap Up

---