

# B . R . I . D . G . E . S

A Program to Reduce Adolescent Dating Violence





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# What is Adolescent Dating Violence?



**PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE, GENDER STEREOTYPING, CYBERVIOLENCE, TECHNOLOGY ABUSE, AND STALKING ARE ALL ENHANCED IN ADOLESCENT DATING VIOLENCE.**

Adolescent dating violence (ADV) affects millions of young people in the United States. While the definition of ADV is not well defined, it may be understood as the violence between nonmarried adolescent youth (between 10 and 24 years old) in a current or former relationship. Violence may include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological/emotional violence, cyber violence, and/or stalking.

# TACTICS OF VIOLENCE



# High Danger and Difference

- Homicide is the second leading cause of death of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19.
- Adolescents were more likely to be killed by another adolescent.
- Between 1997 and 2011, 8.9% of domestic violence homicide victims were under 21
- ADV is just as lethal as IPV

## Behavioral Risk

- Adolescents are at an increased risk of utilizing aggressive tactics
- Maladaptive coping strategies due to age
- The adolescent brain makes youth more vulnerable to increased emotional swings and codependency.
- The capacity to manage emotions decreases when a person has experienced trauma which is a factor in both victimization and perpetration of ADV.

## Different between ADV and IPV

- In ADV, patterns of escalation increase between relationships (e.g., when a relationship ends and/or when another relationship begins) rather than within, as is the case in IPV.
- Types of violence are stable in ADV, both in severity and directionality.
- Patterns of violence are also prolonged.
- Violence within dating relationships is in danger of becoming chronic.
- Psychological abuse, gender stereotyping, cyber violence, technology abuse, and stalking are all enhanced in ADV.
- Female adolescents perpetrate ADV at higher rates than male adolescents, although they are at higher risk of severe injury and death.

# THE MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT

Adolescents caught in the cycle of violence are susceptible to adverse mental health outcomes and may be at increased risk of engaging in high-risk behaviors, including:

- Suicide and suicidal ideation
- Substance abuse,
- Higher sexual risk-taking
- Increased adolescent pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Eating disorders
- Sleep disturbances



*Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime.*

# THE ADOLESCENT BRAIN

**STUDIES HAVE FOUND THAT AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS IN YOUTH MAY BE USED AS A WAY TO COMMUNICATE DIFFICULT EMOTIONS, SUCH AS DEEP AFFECTION AND/OR JEALOUSY.**

Adolescents differ in how they behave, solve problems, and make decisions. The reasons for this are that adolescent brains are still maturing and will continue to grow and develop into their early adult years. Because the adolescent brain has not fully developed, they cannot always think through their problems and make healthy decisions.

Because of their undeveloped  
brains, adolescents are  
vulnerable to:

- Impulsive behavior,
- Misread social cues and emotions,
- Getting into fights,
- Engaging in dangerous or risky behavior,
- Not thinking before they act,
- Not being able to take a break to consider the consequences of their actions, and
- Not being able to change their behaviors without intervention.

# HOW CAN B.R.I.D.G.E.S HELP?

B.R.I.D.G.E.S believes in the healing power of education. The program considers the latest research on adolescent dating violence and violence intervention and recognizes violence as cultural, systemic, and interdependent. The program consists of 24 weekly sessions and aims to build emotional regulation skills and challenge belief systems about violence from an intersectional framework.

The curriculum is built on the teachings of **B.R.I.D.G.E.S.**:

- **B**elief System and accountability
- **R**elationship history
- **I**ndicators and motivations
- **D**efense mechanisms
- **G**ender stereotyping
- **E**nding cyber violence
- **S**talking diversion

Each topic will be addressed in the treatment process.





# HOW CAN B.R.I.D.G.E.S HELP?

## Important information:

- Each participant will meet weekly for a period of 24 weeks.
- Before beginning the treatment, each participant will complete a detailed assessment to understand behavioral history, behavioral patterns, and concerns.
- From the assessment, a complete treatment plan will be created and discussed with the participant.



## Program Completion

Participants are eligible for program completion if the following criteria are met:

- Participants must actively engage in each group by showing up on time and participating fully.
- Abstain from violent behavior throughout the duration of the program. This includes physical, emotional, and verbal abuse.
- Participants must complete all assignments to be eligible for graduation.

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

## **REDUCING. PREVENTION. INTERVENTION.**

Reducing the occurrence of ADV and preventing its harmful and long-lasting effects on individuals and their families requires a coordinated effort between community members, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and the juvenile court systems.

**Juvenile court judges** can lead coordinated reform efforts by promoting and engaging in programs that decrease violent behavior informed by brain science and research in adolescent development. Further, they can use their significant influence to connect key stakeholders (the justice system, government, and community organizations) and lead substantive discussions about violence reduction.

**The following are recommendations adapted from the CDC "Preventing Teen Dating Violence" and "The Role of the Judge in Transforming Juvenile Probation: A Toolkit for Leadership"**

### **Teach safe and healthy relationship skills**

- Social-emotional learning programs for youth
- Healthy relationship programs for couples

### **Engage Influential adults and peers**

- Men and boys as allies in the prevention
- Bystander empowerment and education
- Family-based programs
- Work in partnership with families
- Increase positive influences

# HOW CAN YOU HELP?

## **Disrupt the developmental pathways toward partner violence**

- Early childhood home visitation
- Preschool enrichment with family engagement
- Parenting skill and family relationship programs
- Treatment for at-risk children, youth, and families
- motivate behavioral change through incentives and rewards, rather than the threat of sanctions
- Expect setbacks by youth and avoid overreacting
- Keep probation terms to a few months rather than a year or two years, as extended involvement in the justice system is counterproductive.

## **Create protective environments**

- Improve school climate and safety
- Improve organizational policies and workplace climate
- Modify the physical and social environments of neighborhoods

## **Strengthen economic support for families**

- Strengthen household financial security
- Strengthen work-family supports

## **Support survivors to increase safety and lessen harms**

- Victim-centered services
- Housing programs
- First responder and civil legal protections
- Patient-centered approaches
- Treatment and support for survivors of IPV, including teen dating violence

*Thank!  
You!*

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