Domestic Violence and Young Women

There is a common myth in society that believes that domestic violence only happens to older women who are married or living with their partner and perhaps, have children. However, research shows that young women are at risk from violence within dating relationships.

Dating violence is a repeated pattern of behaviour. It often includes several different types of abusive behaviour, and may get worse the longer the two people are together. Perpetrators use domestic abuse to control their partners. The abuse may continue even when the relationship has ended.

The Women’s Aid National Freephone Helpline receive calls from young women who say that they are not even sure they should be calling but that something just doesn’t feel right. Most girls have friends they can turn to, but sometimes it is hard to confide about something like dating violence.

Tactics of abuse against young women include:

- Being constantly put down or degraded
- Being constantly checked up on by texts and calls
- Being prevented from spending time with family or friends
- Being hit, slapped, bitten, threatened
- Being followed
- Being sexually assaulted or raped
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Statistics:

• In research conducted by Women’s Aid in Ireland, 95% of young women and 84% of young men reported knowing someone who had experienced abuse, violence and harassment ranging from being followed, to being forced to have sex, to being hit by a partner. The persons known were mainly young women. 1 in 4 young women knew someone who was forced to have sex.

• A 2007 Amnesty International (Northern Ireland) survey among 715 university students at the four campuses of the University of Ulster found that 44% of respondents knew at least one woman or girl who had been hit by a boyfriend or partner.

• In the same survey, 32% knew at least one woman or girl who had been coerced or pressurised to have sex by a boyfriend/partner.

• A 2009 report from the NSPCC in the UK found that 25% of teenage girls surveyed had experienced physical violence by their boyfriends. 1 in 6 girls disclosed being pressurised into sexual intercourse.
10 signs of an abusive dating relationship

1. If he calls her names and puts her down in front of people
2. If he acts extremely jealous or possessive
3. If he looks or acts in ways that scare her
4. If he texts her excessively
5. If he threatens to kill or hurt her or himself if she leaves him
6. If he stops her from seeing family and friends
7. If he forces her to have sex against her will
8. If he hits, slaps, punches or kicks her
9. If she seems worried about upsetting him or making him angry
10. If she has given up things that were important to her like friends and interests and she seems more isolated

“Things were fine to start with but then he started becoming possessive and wouldn’t leave me alone. Whenever I went out with my friends, or even by myself, I would get bombarded with phone calls and texts demanding to know where I was, what I was doing and who I was with. It just became too much. I couldn’t get away from him. I decided to end it but he wouldn’t accept it. Finally there was a confrontation one day and he hit me in the face.” Samantha, 14.