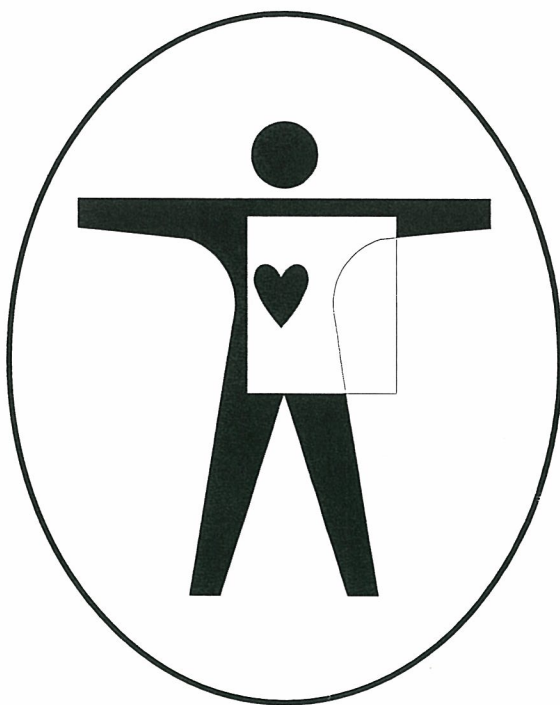


*User's Guide*

# RED FLAGS

## Avoiding Abusive Relationships

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## Introduction

The issue of domestic violence is gaining increased public awareness. The media is focusing on the wide scope of the problem. The laws are getting tougher. Police are becoming more responsive. But still domestic violence continues.

One way to head off future attacks is for teenagers to learn to make good dating and relationship choices right from the start. There are usually signs that a relationship could be headed down the wrong track but the indicators are often ignored. Teens, as well as adults, often get caught up in a romantic fantasy of what they want a date to be rather than what it is.

A reality check is in order. Teens need to understand that they should expect dating to be a healthy experience. Even dates that turn out to be duds should be safe. People in bad relationships often put up with mental and physical abuse thinking that they either deserve it or that they can change the situation. The best advice for a person in a bad dating situation is to get out of it. Even better advice would be to learn to spot the signs of potential problems ahead of time.

The **RED FLAGS: Avoiding Abusive Relationships** video shows teens examples of problem dating situations and encourages them to choose dates who will keep them safe, treat them with respect and share values that are similar to theirs.

## Educational Goals

After watching **RED FLAGS: Avoiding Abusive Relationships** and working through the User's Guide, students will be able to:

1. Realize there can be more problems in dating than just discovering you don't like the person very much.
2. Understand that when you go out, you should expect to feel safe, be respected, and share similar values with your date.
3. Identify some problem areas to watch out for:
  - Controlling Behavior
  - Lying
  - Problem Lifestyles
  - Obsessive Behavior
  - Physical Abuse
  - Sexual Pressure
4. Recognize the abuse signs early on and avoid situations that could range from unpleasant to dangerous.
5. Understand the best way to handle an abusive relationship is to get out of it before the problems get any worse.

## Video Overview

The Love Referee explains to teens the basics of dating. He reminds them that unlike sports, dating is not a game. It isn't about strategy and control and it certainly isn't about scoring. Whether your date is a dream or a dud, isn't really the point because dating is about meeting a variety of people and determining what qualities would be important to you in a successful adult relationship. However, one of the basic rules of dating is that whenever you go out with someone, you should expect to feel safe, be respected and share similar values.

Through a mix of personal stories and vignettes, The Love Ref shows teens some abusive dating situations. They include incidences of control, lying, problem lifestyles, obsessive behavior, physical abuse and sexual pressure.

He also emphasizes that no matter how nice or understanding or smart you are, you really can't change someone or fix things for them. If you're being abused either mentally or physically, don't try to work the problem out. Just get out. And if you're the one causing the problems, you have an opportunity to change your behavior now and start respecting the people you go out with.

The Love Ref doesn't say that teens should hide out during their high school years. But being aware of what could happen is just part of making good choices. Teens are encouraged to have fun with their dream dates and not so dreamy dates...it's all a part of high school. It's all a part of life.

## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever gone out with someone who wasn't nice to you? How did he or she act on the date or during the relationship? Have you ever been frightened on a date? Why?
2. If you found out that your boyfriend or girlfriend was lying to you, how would you feel? What would you do? Do you think people who are dating lie to each other?
3. Do you think most girls would change something about their appearance, personality or friends, if their boyfriends insisted that they did? Do you think most boys would change something about themselves for a girl?
4. Have you ever been jealous? Has a person you were dating been jealous of you? What happened? Did you ever follow or check up on someone? How did that make you feel? How would you feel if someone you were dating or had been dating spied on you?
5. Do you know of anyone who was pressured to have sex when they didn't want to? What did they do in the situation? What would you do?
6. Can you imagine being physically hurt by a person you are dating? Do you think it happens very often? Do you think you can tell ahead of time who might hurt you?
7. Is it easy or difficult to tell if a relationship isn't right? What's the best thing to do if a dating situation doesn't make you feel good about yourself?

## **What Should They Do?**

Divide the class into groups of three or four and instruct them to discuss and decide what should happen in these dating relationships. A discussion period should follow.

### **Roxanne and Darrin**

Roxanne and Darrin broke up a month ago. Roxanne is now dating Kevin. But it seems everywhere they go, Darrin shows up. He doesn't talk to either one of them. He just lets them know he's around. Roxanne still has feelings for Darrin but she's uncomfortable with his behavior. What should Roxanne do about the situation? What should Kevin do? What should Darrin do?

### **Chantonya and Quincy**

Chantonya is crazy about Quincy. They've only gone out three times but they hang around together all the time. Quincy is so much fun and everyone likes him. He's been trying to convince Chantonya to have sex with him since their first date. Even though she didn't really want to, it was flattering that he liked her so much. Now she has found out he already has a child with an ex-girlfriend. What should she do?

### **Natasha and Vinnie**

Vinnie's mother died last Spring from problems caused by her alcoholism. He was devastated and vowed to stay away from any alcohol related activities. Vinnie has been dating Natasha. She knows all about Vinnie's unhappiness and the events surrounding his mother's death. On one date, Vinnie found a bottle of liquor under the passenger seat of Natasha's car. Natasha said someone borrowed her car last weekend and that's probably how it got there. He believed her. Then the following week, when they met at a party, Natasha and her friends were obviously drunk. When he confronted her about it, she told him to chill out and grow up. What should Vinnie do?

## **Teen Relationship Books**

Bode, Janet, *Heartbreak and Roses: Real Life Stories of Troubled Love*  
Delacourte Press 1994



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