

## Working to Prevent Teen Dating Violence: The Choose Respect Program

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Many people begin to explore dating relationships during their teenage years. Values formed during this time period can have lasting influence in formation of future relationships. This makes adolescence the perfect time for parents and other adults to help foster healthy, respectful attitudes toward dating and help teens set boundaries for relationships in general.

To help teens develop healthy relationship values the BSU Practicum Clinic is currently partnering with local middle schools to engage teens in *Choose Respect*. *Choose Respect* is a series of interactive presentations that gives teens a chance to talk about their ideas of what healthy relationships and friendships look like. By increasing teens' ability to recognize and develop healthy relationship values, *Choose Respect* helps prevent teens from entering into or staying in unhealthy and abusive relationships. Introducing such ideas early is important because...



*Choose Respect* teaches that healthy relationships allow people to talk openly, honestly,

- 25% of young people report verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse each year,
- 20% of young people report being a victim of emotional abuse,
- 20% of high schools girls have been physically or sexually abused by a dating partner, and
- 70% of girls and 52% of boys in abusive relationships report physical injury.

Dating violence has been associated with unsafe sexual behaviors that may lead to unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (such as HIV). Dating violence can result in low self-esteem and negative body image

and freely without being pressured to act or think in a certain way. Students learn the value of supporting friends, how to make decisions, and to talk things through when problems arise. Warning signs of abuse such as isolation from family and friends, loss of interest in activities and hobbies, or suspicious bruises or injuries and signs that someone might be abusive (e.g., extreme

jealousy, threats to hurt self or others, attempts to control others, and insulting a partner in public or private) are also introduced.

If you're a parent, a teacher, a counselor, or an adult in the life of a teenager, remember these tips for talking about what makes relationships healthy or unhealthy:

- Find the time and the place to discuss relationship values.
- Talk while teens are away from video games, television, computers and phones – a car ride or one-on-one time is a great opportunity to talk.
- Speak *with*, not *at* teens to show respect.
- Listen more than you talk, do not judge, and pay attention! Teens communicate through both words and behaviors.
- Be honest and do not lecture. Keep the content of what you're saying relevant.

*Choose Respect* was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is supported locally through a grant from Community Partners for Child Safety. Teens are learning to *Choose Respect* in Delaware, Jay, Blackford, Randolph, and Grant counties.

For more information go to [www.chooserespect.org](http://www.chooserespect.org)

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# Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,  
I recently come out to my best friend as gay. Luckily, she was really supportive but still surprised. It has taken me years to get the guts to tell her and now it's time to tell my parents. I'm not even sure how to begin telling them. I keep beating myself up because I'm not even sure why it's so hard for me to tell others. My other friends that have come out didn't seem to struggle with it as much as I am. How can I talk to my parents about this?  
Sincerely,  
Cat's got my tongue

Dear Cat's Got My Tongue,

Just because you're struggling doesn't mean that you aren't brave! There are a lot of risks that go into telling someone about something as personal as your sexuality. Not to mention, there is no way for you to know for certain how the other person will react. I'm sure it took you years to tell your best friend because you needed that time to try and determine her reaction. We do things like that to try and avoid getting hurt. Although your best friend had a positive reaction, she could have also reacted with anger, fear, or discomfort. If that were the case, you would feel crushed, hurt and upset. No one wants to feel those

things and so we try to minimize the risk by testing others (for days, months, or years). It helps us determine if they will reject us for what we have to tell them. You simply just needed a bit more time than your friends. As you begin to prepare to tell your parents, here are some things to consider:

- **Sharing your personal information with others is a natural part of relationships that is built on trust, respect and caring.**
- **The main objective of sharing ourselves with others is to gain that freedom of being genuine, authentic and our true selves around those we care about.**
- **It is normal to want and hope for a positive, respectful reaction, AND it is normal to be afraid of the potential of a negative reaction to what you are about to share.**
- **Practicing with your best friend or coming out to others that you know will be supportive might be something you can do before talking to your parents.**
- **The people we share personal information with usually need a bit of time to process what we have told them. Give your par-**

**ents some time to absorb the news.**

We live in a world where being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered is not always ok. The rampant prejudice and discrimination makes "coming out" a very difficult process. If you need more guidance, someone to listen, or stand by your side, our excellently trained counselors can be there. Contact Ball State University's Practicum Counseling Center and get in touch with one of our counselors today.

Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047. Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

## Tips For Fighting Fair

By: Kelly Clougher, MA

### Use "I" Statements Rather Than "You" Statements

Share how you are feeling by using "I" statements (e.g., "I feel hurt when we don't spend time together). Using "you" statements (e.g., "You never spend time with me) puts your partner on the defense.

### Keep It Relevant

Focus on the current issue and avoid bringing up the past. When you are hurting and upset it is easy to unload and bring up past grudges; however this causes the argument to deteriorate.

### Use Feeling Statements Rather Than Think Statements

Express how you feel (e.g., "I

feel hurt when don't call me) and not what you think.

### Avoid Character Abuse

Do not attack your partner's personality or values. This may lead to



name calling and you could say something you do not mean.

### Argue With Love

No matter how angry or hurt you are, remember you love your partner. Show respect for that love even

in the midst of a fight.

### Listen And Be Present

Stop what you are doing (e.g., turn off the television) and maintain eye contact. Do not interrupt your partner and listen to what he/she is saying before you respond.

### Use "Time-Outs"

Take time to cool down if you are too upset to reasonably discuss the issue. Tell your partner you will be ready to talk once you calm down.

### Accept Differences

Remember everyone has different feelings. You and your partner may feel differently about the issue. Accept those differences and respect the fact that your feelings do not agree.

### Seek Professional Help

If your arguments happen more often, increase in intensity, or your issues are not getting resolved, then contact a counselor for couples counseling.

# How To Stay in Love

By: Bjorg Hermannsdottir, MA

When the honeymoon phase is over and everyday life has settled in, you may find that the initial passion between you and your partner has lost its flame. If that is your story, here is how you can light up the blaze and become more intimate:

- **Remember good times and talk about how to recreate those feelings.**
- **Plan a vacation or a trip out of town.**
- **Have a dinner party.**
- **Make a special jar with 52 things you'd like your partner to do for you.**
- **Each week draw one and do it.**
- **Exercise together.**
- **Take time to talk and cuddle.**
- **Organize a date where you pretend you are "courting" one another.**
- **Share a breakfast during the workweek.**
- **Pick one day a week to make your partner feel special.**
- **Go for a walk together.**
- **Write love letters to one another.**
- **Check in with your partner at the end of the day and talk about the events experienced.**
- **Read the morning paper together.**
- **Go out for a picnic.**



## Keeping Your Relationship Strong

The following recommendations were made by John Gottman, PhD, who has spent decades studying intimate relationships. He has found that happy couples tend to have certain behaviors in common and that these same behaviors can help repair relationships that are in trouble:



### **Watch your**

**words.** People who choose not to express every negative thought when talking about sensitive issues are more likely to have a satisfying relationship.

**Soften your "start up."** Conflicts often escalate after one partner brings up a problem in a critical or confrontational tone. Practice starting up discussions in a gentle way and without blaming.

**Have high standards.** Couples who do not accept hurtful behavior from each other have a better chance of being satisfied in their relationship. Remember to treat each other with respect, even when you have a conflict!

**Learn to end arguments.** Being able to exit an argument before it gets out of control is important. Examples of repairing a situation before an argument becomes too heated include: making a caring comment ("I know that this hurts"), emphasizing that you are facing the situa-

tion together ("This is our problem"), showing that you understand what your partner is trying to tell you ("I hear that you would like this to change"), and showing appreciation for your partner ("I appreciate that you..."). You can also agree to take a break for 20 minutes and continue the discussion when you have both calmed down.

**Focus on the positives.** When interacting with their partner, happy couples tend to make about five times as many positive comments regarding the relationship as negatives. This also applies when discussing problems in the relationship.

**Seek help early.** When dealing with relationship problems, couples often wait for years until they decide to seek help. The sooner you seek help, the sooner you can improve your relationship!



# Featured Counselor Profile

## Kathleen Wheeler, MA

By Mona Ghosheh, MEd

Kathleen Wheeler is studying to receive her Clinical Mental Health Counseling M.A. degree from the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. She is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic while also conducting assessments for the Disability Determination Services (DDS) and implementing the Choose Respect program (a dating violence prevention program for middle school age students in schools across several surrounding counties). The following is a discussion with Kathleen, one of many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

### How did you decide to pursue this field of study?

I have always been a “people person” and enjoyed interacting with different types of people. So naturally, I have always been interested in various types of people-oriented professions, especially those in which I could help others in need. This field is a perfect fit. I completed my M.A. in Clinical Psychology at Western Carolina University with a background in assessment and research. Because I had a strong de-

**I have always been a “people person” and enjoyed interacting with different types of people.**

sire to help clients in a therapeutic capacity, I felt pursuing another degree in which I would receive further training as a clinician would help me be a better, more well-rounded professional.

### What are your clinical interests?

My interests include child and adolescent development, family therapy, health psychology (especially pediatric anxiety, coping and adherence), program development and evaluation, psychoeducation and prevention, and assessment.

### What has been your most influential (or exciting, or enjoyable) work experience?

I have had so many influential and exciting experiences over the last several years that it’s hard to pick just one! Each experience in its own way has been uniquely valuable to me and has helped me grow, both personally and professionally. In general, though, my most inspirational experiences have been when clients have told me I made a positive and meaningful difference in their life.

### Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?

I especially enjoy working with families, the general child

and adolescent population, and the pediatric, adolescent and young adult medical patient population.

### What do you hope to do after you graduate?

My goal after graduation is to find employment working with a general and/or medical population of children, adolescents, and families. I am open to working in a variety of clinical and medical settings and hope to find a setting where I can integrate my clinical interests with my desire to help others.



Kathleen Wheeler, master’s student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services

## Featured Mental Health Issue:

### Warning Signs of An Abusive Relationship

By: Aikaterini Psarropoulou, MA

When does a relationship become a nightmare? The truth is that warning signs are usually apparent very early in the relationship. Here are some signs that might indicate that you are in an abusive relationship:

#### Jealousy

Jealousy is sometimes a natural part of a relationship; however, in partner abuse, jealousy is used as control in a disguise of love. As your partner's jealousy intensifies, you might find yourself changing your way of life, the people you normally interact with and the places you go.

#### Name Calling

Another sign is name calling, making fun of you or putting you down in public. Phrases such as "you are so stupid" and "you can't do anything right" are some examples of this behavior.

#### Fear

Feeling intimidated by your partner, who is easily upset and cannot control their anger, is a sign of abuse. The partner might smash things or use threatening gestures or looks.

#### Isolation

The partner tries to keep you from seeing your family or friends, turns them against you, or does not allow you to have any privacy.

#### Threats

Threats are also very common signs of abuse: threatening that her or she will hurt you or kill you, threatening suicide or says things like, "if I can't



have you, no one will."

#### Financial Control

The economic abuse is another warning sign. If your partner is controlling all the money or does not allow you to have a job, are some good examples.

#### Intimacy

Furthermore, a very common sign of abuse is sexual abuse, such as coercing or forcing unwanted sex, treating you as a sex object or not taking "no" for an answer.

These are only some of the signs of an abusive relationship but there are numerous other signs. The common theme of all of them despite their surface differences is control. In other words, the most significant sign of abuse is the feeling of being controlled and unable to make your own choices.

## Featured Wellness Issue:

### Physical Benefits of Being in a Healthy Relationship

By: Jill Sullivan, MA

While there are many positive aspects of being in a healthy relationship with a partner, the physical aspects are sometimes overlooked. A hormone called *oxytocin*, also known as "the cuddle hormone" or "the love hormone," has been found to play a role on one's physical health when in a healthy romantic relationship. *Oxytocin* has been seen to increase when partners touch, hug, emotionally connect, or are intimate in other ways. One study found that only 10 minutes of warm physical and emotional contact with one's partner increased levels of *oxytocin* in both themselves and their partners. Increases in *oxytocin* have been thought



to benefit physical health by fighting against the effects of stress by

- lowering levels of stress hormone,
- improving immunity,
- reducing blood pressure, and
- improving mood.

Because stress is such a common experience in our everyday lives, having a physically and emotionally healthy relationship can help ease the negative effect that daily stress has on our bodies. At the same time, an unhealthy romantic relationship may be an additional stressor added to your daily life. So, when thinking about the costs and benefits of your romantic relationships, a definite component to think about is the amount of stress that your relationship adds to your life.

Finally, according to WedMD.com other health benefits have been found to be linked to sexual intimacy and orgasms

due to the release of *oxytocin* including:

- Reduction in the stress hormone, better sleep, increased intimacy, and increased immunity.

You might ask yourself how to improve the health of your current or future romantic relationships to benefit your physical health. Ways to increase positive time together with your partner (thus potentially increasing your release of *oxytocin*) include:

- Increasing the amount of *quality* time you spend with your partner.
- Developing ways to increase the *emotional intimacy* within your relationship (i.e., share thoughts and feelings with each other).
- Finding ways to increase *physical intimacy*, including but not limited to hugs, holding hands, and cuddling.

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# Mind Matters

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#### We're on the Web!

[http://www.bsu.edu/  
counselingpsychology/clinic/](http://www.bsu.edu/counselingpsychology/clinic/)

## Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

### Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

### Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

### Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
  - Parenting
  - Social skills
  - Anger control
  - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

### Hours of Operation

- August-May
  - 9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
  - 9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

*All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.*