

Healthy Relationship High School Teachers Toolkit

Monash Education

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How to Help Your Student

You can play an important role in helping students recognize abuse and get the help they need. Consider these tips as you try to make a positive change in your students' lives:

Be clear: Tell your students that abuse is unacceptable and that this is an issue you take very seriously.

Encourage discussion: Ask students what they think about abuse. Encourage them to think critically about the impact of violence—in their own relationships and society at large.

Listen: Listen to what students tell you and what you see and hear. Let them know you care, that you are there for them and that you are paying attention.

Be prepared: Be aware of mandatory reporting requirements that apply to you as a teacher and notify your school counsellor when you suspect abuse.

Spread the word: Enlist your colleagues and administrators in raising awareness of teen dating violence.

If you are certain that your student is involved in an abusive relationship, here's what you can do:

Tell your student that you're concerned for their safety. Point out that what's happening isn't "normal." Everyone deserves a safe and healthy relationship. After consulting with the student's parents, offer to connect them with a professional, like a counsellor or attorney, who they can talk to confidentially.

Be supportive and understanding. Stress that you're on their side. Provide information and non-judgmental support. Let your student know that it's not their fault and no one "deserves" to be abused. Make it clear that you don't blame them and you respect their choices.

Believe them and take them seriously. Your student may be reluctant to share their experiences in fear of no one believing what they say. As you validate their feelings and show your support, they can become more comfortable and trust you with more information. Be careful not to minimize their situation due to age, inexperience or the length of their relationship.

Help develop a safety plan. One of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship is when the victim decides to leave. Be especially supportive during this time and try to connect the student to support groups or professionals that can help keep them safe.

Remember that ultimately your student must be the one who decides to leave the relationship.

There are many complex reasons why victims stay in unhealthy relationships. Your support can make a critical difference in helping your student find their own way to end their unhealthy relationship.