

Youth Empowerment Education

An alarming number of teens in dating relationships are being controlled, threatened and humiliated through cell phones and the Internet with unimaginable frequency.

Additionally, the research reveals disturbing data that a significant majority of parents are completely unaware of this type of dating abuse and the dangers facing their teens.

According to Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU) for Liz Claiborne Inc., teens ages 13-18 report that dating abuse via technology is a serious problem

* 71% of teens regard boyfriends/girlfriends spreading rumors about them on cell phones and social networking sites as a serious problem.

* 68% of teens say boyfriends/girlfriends sharing private or embarrassing pictures/videos on cell phones and computers is a serious problem.

A recent survey shows that even twenty-five percent of 'tweens' say they're experiencing physical violence in their romantic relationships. Teens and 'tweens are growing up in a world where violence bombards them everywhere. Where pop culture images constantly objectify and degrade women. The key to long-term social change is education.

.SafeHouse Youth Empowerment Educators teach students how to identify red flags like jealousy and controlling behavior that are often precursors to violence. They also enlist peer to peer programs that help teens understand what makes a healthy relationship. To schedule a presentation, call 407-302-5220 ext. 221.

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On the day he killed her and then himself in front of her family's east Harris County home in 2008, Mueller stood only 10 feet away with her own 1-year-old child. She remembers begging her sister not to talk to him. "But (Pelfrey) was sure she could handle it," Mueller said, "and needed to get the child support for their 3-year-old son." Mueller watched the 3-year-old climb into his father's lap as he sat in his truck while Pelfrey stood next to the truck's door. An argument soon erupted and Mueller heard the boyfriend yell, "Well, if I can't have you, nobody will," before he fatally shot Pelfrey and then himself. The screams from her nephew, who was hanging out the truck window surrounded by blood and death, still haunt her.

"I thought he loved his son, but he left him with no parents," Mueller said..

SafeHouse Youth Empowerment Educators promote the calendar with hopes that young girls will steer clear of unhealthy relationships. Calendars are available at www.royalty4daniela.org, for \$20 each and benefit the local abuse shelter near Houston, Betty's Haven. *Abridged and adapted for informational purposes only by SafeHouse editors. Original article by Cindy Horswell, Houston Chronicle, Dec. 7, 2009.*



PARENTS BE AWARE:

Nearly one in four teens communicate hourly with his or her partner by cell phone or text messaging between midnight and 5 a.m., according to a survey conducted by Teenage Research Unlimited, a research organization specializing in research on teens and young adults.

A former SafeHouse SafeKid resident, now a freshman at the University of Central Florida, says that as a teenager she was in an extremely controlling relationship, and it eventually turned violent. She states that she was on the phone or her computer until 5 a.m. some nights, talking to her boyfriend. "I'd pretend to be sleeping. I'd shut the lights off and I'd be quiet, and no one would know the difference because all you had to do was hide your cell phone or computer under the covers."

About one in three teens surveyed who have been in a relationship said their partner had text messaged them 10, 20 and up to 30 times per hour to find out where they are, what they're doing, or who they're with.