

**Synopsis:** *Dating violence knows no age limits, no racial boundaries and does not discriminate under any guise. 20% of teenage girls are victims and the number could rise higher. Here is what can be done to stem the tide.*

## **Dating Violence Isn't Just An Adult Problem**

Dating violence is defined as the perpetration, or threat, of an act of violence, by at least one member of an unmarried couple on the other.

[Dating violence](#) also happens when one partner attempts to maintain power and control over the other through violence.

[Dating violence](#) crosses racial, age, economic and social lines, yet there are many traits that abusers and victims have in common.

## **Instead Of A Fairytale...**

Tara Alcox knows the cycle of violence. At 30, she still gets emotional when talking about the three-years she endured physical and emotional abuse by a boy who claimed he loved her.

At 16, Tara acted like a typical teen. She was active in school, participated in the district's choir and was madly in love with her new boyfriend.

"You are just so innocent," Tara said recently. "You believe perfect love and acceptance are going to come to your door and love life will be a fairytale."

For Tara, that fairytale turned into a nightmare. Her boyfriend began tracking every move she made. She controlled who she could see and where she could go. Then everything became violent.

"He would slap me around if I didn't jump at his command. Once, he strangled me until I blacked out," Tara said.

Her story is common.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), physical and emotional violence, between dating partners, often starts as young as eleven.

### **Victim and Abuser Traits**

According to the [Center for Promoting Alternatives to Violence](#), abusers are often obsessively jealous, overly confident, and has a history of mood swings or violence.

Victims often share many traits including physical signs of injury, missing time at school or work, changes in mood and increasing use of drugs or alcohol. Victims often isolate themselves from friends and family and blame themselves for any abuse.

### **Las Vegas Introduces Curriculum**

The Clark County School District recently introduced a curriculum to teach kids how to handle toxic relationships. In addition to the Clark County program, the [CDC](#) also provides online training CDC's training is accredited and takes about 60-minutes to complete.

Tara volunteers with local groups such as Safe Nets which help young girls avoid abusive partners.

According to a recent study in the Journal of Pediatrics, spanking is connected to dating violence later in life.

The survey followed over 700 19- and 20-year-olds who were spanked as a toddler. Twenty percent admitted to being violent in a relationship.

Bill Coffey, a therapist with the [Council for Relationships](#), claims that's because people who were spanked as a kid often grow up leaning that

violence is ok when it comes to managing behavior.

Coffey suggest parents should manage discipline firmly but without physical contact. Taking a favored toy or putting the child in time out are acceptable alternatives.

“You have to teach children their behavior has consequences. But hitting is not the consequence,” said Coffey.

### **The Takeaway**

“Unhealthy relationships can start early and last a lifetime,” says [Nicholas Wooldridge](#), a Las Vegas defense attorney. “Teenagers often think behaviors, such as teasing and name-calling, are a “typical” part of a relationship. In reality, the behaviors can turn abusive and develop into more advanced forms of violence.”

## **Social Media**

### Twitter

Dating violence has remained in the shadows for centuries. Thanks to new programs and research, more people are becoming aware.

### Twitter

Around 20% of people in a dating relationship are victims of dating violence.

### Facebook

About 1-in-5 of teenage girls in America are victims of 'dating violence.'

### LinkedIn

The CDC teams with Las Vegas in offering programs to stem the violence erupting through "dating violence."