

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL NETWORK OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY (D.V.L.N.)
THE EDUCATION & AWARENESS COMMITTEE
THE EDUCATION/ AWARENESS/COMMUNICATION/HEALTH (T.E.A.C.H) NEWSLETTER
VOLUME 1: ISSUE 3

This is the third in a series of articles that the Domestic Violence Legal Network (DVLN) of Montgomery County has created.

To learn about DVLN's history, goals and objectives, along with our reasons for creating this series, please refer to Articles 1 & 2.

In previous articles we focused on defining domestic violence; elaborating on techniques utilized by one family member to obtain power and control over another; the impact on children; and available local resources.

This article offers guidelines for healthy relationship as well as information on how to get help if you question a relationship. Jan Biresch

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP by Lillian Sulliman

As healthy relationships are based on Equality in accordance with the "flip side" of the Power and Control Wheel, simply referenced as the "Equality Wheel", please be aware of personality characteristics as noted:

Respect- for self and for others; this facet has perhaps the most discernible import throughout all other facets in which the relationship can openly exist;

Honesty and Trust – is openly honest; gives you the benefit of the doubt; does not constantly question you as to who, what and where; accepts the fact that sometimes you really need to work overtime to finish up that project;

Mutual Caring, Kindness and Understanding - ever courteously considerate; considerateness ever begets considerateness; thoughtful; little unexpected kindnesses; enjoys listening to the happenings of your day;

Acceptance - of family, friends and work associates, as well as singular interests one of another – sports versus music; gym versus gardening; understands that you may need a night out with friends/family members;

Complementary – instead of negative put-downs and/or name-calling there are words of praise; words that express meaningful appreciation, allowing you to feel special about yourself;

Mutual Decision Making- as to family- related issues including finances, career options, ethical mores/values, discipline of children, home care, health care, religious beliefs;

Non-Violence – the appearance of anger issues need to be discussed openly, calmly and discreetly;

arguments and disagreements are natural facets of any relationship, but are readily dealt with in a civil and meaningful manner; the "moving of mountains" can be capably addressed within the presence of mutual respect leading to a depth of realness and honesty; if necessary, simply agree to disagree; try not to carry anger over into another day;

Acceptance of Self –an individual, strong and complete unto self; is ever cognizant of YOU as an individual wherein YOU can consistently stay true to your inner being; does not try to swallow you up by pushing his persona onto you; does not claim "ownership" or "entitlement ". Excerpts from Kahlil Gibran in The Prophet, underline the importance of self within a healthy relationship:

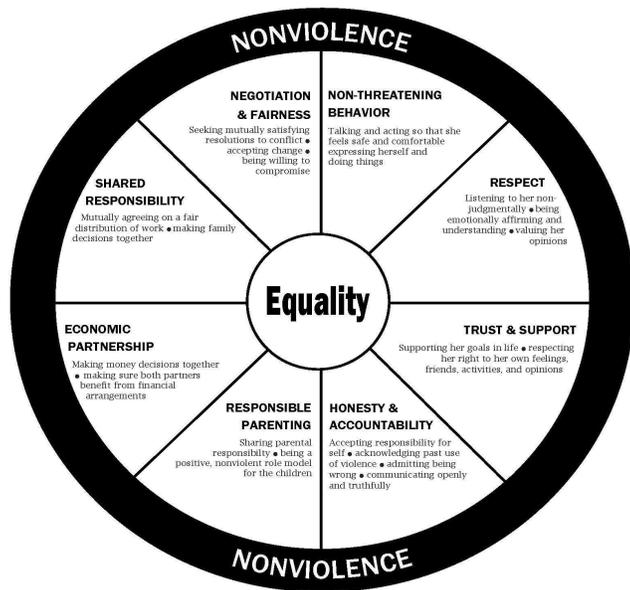
"...let there be spaces within your togetherness.... (that) each one of you be alone;"

"...stand together, but not too near together (that you) grow not in each other's shadow." (1)

Notably there is no magic formula, only the full recognition and presence of equality within the overall partnership itself. Each partner needs to understand that character values such as respect, kindness, honesty and dignity each play a vital part in creating a balanced relationship. Be ever true to yourself, being mindful of the relationship itself and its import to the individuals within it. If you value yourself, value your partner, value your relationship, you will be ever working toward that ultimate goal.

(1) Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet*, Alfred A Knopf, Publisher, New York, 1992, 62nd printing, Copyright, Kahlil Gibran, 1923, pp 16-17

Is your relationship based on equality?



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Adapted by

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PURSuing POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

DENISE FLYNN, MHS/PPSLC@ Solutions for Life, LLC

A Healthy Relationship begins with Y-O-U! I hear many people, especially women, say they seem to attract the same type of people; that they must have a streak on their backs that attract the same type of partner and end up in abusive relationships.

People with abusive tendencies, look for and are attracted to people with whom they can manipulate and exert their power and control; people who are easily manipulated, naïve or needy, They present themselves as “the answer” to their problems; charming, trustworthy and/or can help with a need. Also, they look for people who are lonely, have been hurt in relationships before, have low self-esteem/self-value, with whom they can use that to gain their trust and affections. I call them “PREDATORS” – they go from person to person, relationship to relationship with the same hurtful, abusive behavior, same outcomes.

As a Life Coach (Personal, Professional & Spiritual), I tell people to do Self-Inventory via Journaling. See what you want and don’t want in a relationship (platonic friendship or romantic). Be honest with yourself! Look at setting goals to attain the things YOU want, to improve your life situation. Look at objectives, obstacles and challenges. Then look at what resources

and supports are available to help you reach those goals. It’s about changing Y-O-U! You don’t have control over anyone else. You do have self-control/temperance over you, your thoughts, your actions. Change the way you have done things in the past and are doing things now.

An adage of insanity is – doing the same things over and over, expecting different results!

Look at people’s WIIFM (what’s in it for me) in order to help you achieve those goals.

Are they mutual or are they requiring you to give up more than you are willing? Are they using you? Are their actions potentially abusive (see previous newsletter articles on “Dynamics of Abuse”).

Once you do self-inventory, set your goals & objectives for your life, look at obstacles/hindrances. Look at who is in a position to help without requiring you to give up yourself (goals, dreams, ideas, creativity...) – then **JUST DO IT!**

For instance, if you want to be around better people, ask yourself questions and seek positive, truthful answers:

DO SELF-INVENTORY – What do I have to offer others to encourage, empower, improve their lives? Use “I Am” statements (I AM THOUGHTFUL, KIND, A GOOD LISTENER, FUNNY...). What can I gain from others that will positively enhance my life? What are some things I like about me? What are some things I don’t like, have to give up/negative/counter-productive? What are some areas of growth that I need to change about me? Where can I meet a different/better set of people who have similar goals & aspirations?

DO SET ATTAINABLE GOALS – What are your goals and what are your steps to achieve these goals? What are the hindrances/obstacles & how can you get around /overcome them?

Do give yourself attainable time lines to complete goals; check off each thing as you attain /complete it; Do periodically look at your accomplishments; set new attainable goals.

HEALING – Don’t rush into another relationship (friendly or romantic) until you have allowed yourself to heal from the former hurt. Deal with the hurt and move forward. Don’t stay stuck in the hurt/ your past. Move on... Do seek counseling from the appropriate resources that will help you to heal and move forward. Don’t wait for others to validate you. YOU celebrate and appreciate YOU!!

**If you seek a healthy relationship
MAKE THE CALL TO
STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

HEALTHY SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

By Annelise Bloch, LSW

In our first issue, we have focused on and defined sexual violence within abusive relationships as sexualized violence and/or unwanted sexual contact within a relationship. This often includes threats, coercion and mental abuse such as telling lies and threatening the relationship. Now we would like to focus on and highlight the opposite of this, a healthy sexual relationship and their characteristics.

Healthy sexual relationships are based on equality. Equality is complete nonviolence. Equality is demonstrated through non-threatening behavior, respect, trust and support, honesty and accountability, having shared responsibilities, economic partnership and negotiation and fairness.¹

So what does this mean for sexual behaviors within a healthy relationship? Intimacy based on equality is when partners respect each other's boundaries, physically and sexually.² This can only occur when the relationship includes honest communication and respect. Partners are able to communicate their sexual boundaries and wishes to the other and know that they will be heard, listened to and respected.

Intimacy based on equality also includes partners respecting each other's privacy. Equality means having trust, support and respect. Part of that trust, support and respect is valuing the other's opinions and respecting the other's rights to those opinions and feelings. Once that trust, support and respect is there, a partner is able to honestly communicate a need for privacy and the partner in a healthy intimate relationship can easily accept that request and honor the need for privacy.

Intimacy based on equality means not pressuring your partner into sexual acts they are not comfortable with or do not desire. When a relationship based on equality includes honesty, trust and respect there should be no pressure or expectation from one partner to the other for sex on demand or specific sexual requests that the other is not comfortable with.

Intimacy based on equality means being faithful to your partner. A healthy relationship is one where partners are clear about the relationship boundaries and do not act outside of the relationship in a way in which is unfaithful. What the boundaries of the relationship are is up to the specific partners, but once

those boundaries are established through honest communication and respect, partners in healthy relationships should be able to trust that their partner is acting in ways in accordance with those predetermined boundaries.

Finally having a healthy sexual relationship means that partners share sexual histories and sexual health status. When there is honesty in the relationship, partners can count on the other partner to be honest and forthright with this information. Safe sex methods are practiced and because there is established honesty, partners do not have to worry about their partner being dishonest about their use of the agreed upon contraception and there is no risk of coercion through forced pregnancy, birth control sabotage or disease infection³.

Intimacy in a healthy and equal relationship is expressed through affection⁴. This affection is demonstrated in non-threatening and non-coercive manner. Physical affection is consensual and intended to show love and care, not intimidation or power. With honest communication, partners are able to express what types of affection they prefer (hugs, kisses, caresses) and are able to communicate to their partners when they need certain types of affection.

Partners within healthy sexual relationships have several rights⁵! They have the right to:

- **Be with who I want, when I want and how I want.**
- **Have sex when my partner and I both want to.**
- **Have sex that feels good to me.**



³ Monasterio E, Combs N, Warner L, Larsen-Fleming M, St. Andrews A, (2010). *Sexual Health: An Adolescent Provider Toolkit*. San Francisco, CA: Adolescent Health Working Group, San Francisco.

⁴ Casa Myrna Vazquez Equity Wheel

⁵ Monasterio E, Combs N, Warner L, Larsen-Fleming M, St. Andrews A, (2010). *Sexual Health: An Adolescent Provider Toolkit*. San Francisco, CA: Adolescent Health Working Group, San Francisco.

¹ Duluth Model, *Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs Equality Wheel*

² *Healthy relationships Wheel:*

http://www.waypointservices.org/Handler.ashx?Type=large&Item_ID=A924B183-6C3A-4948-9A2A-38988799E4F4

I AM HERE FOR YOU

By Michele Kristofco

In today's hectic world, when our lives are complicated and busy, how do we take good care of our children? HOW? HOW? Parenting is the hardest and most important work a person can do and yet most of us receive very little instruction or guidance in this area. These little lives that we find ourselves responsible for, our children, provide us with an emotional roller coaster. One minute we are happy and proud to be a parent and the next minute we are ready to pull our hair out. We are exhausted, overwhelmed, afraid, inadequate and ill-prepared for this work. Or are we? Let's take a deep breath and be the best we can be for our children. Go ahead...close your eyes, take a deep breath, exhale, and say, "I am here for you". Do it again, if needed, for this is the frame of mind that yields positive results. Now...focus on your child.

Accept your child for who they are. Each child is unique and beautiful. Never allow yourself to be the one your child cannot please. Failing to live up to another person's (especially a parent's) expectations can be traumatizing. Acceptance of your child and the person they are supports healthy development and the formation of confident, happy individuals.

Respect your child. Truly listen to what your child has to say, afford them your full attention, and take into account their feelings, needs, thoughts and ideas. Do not interrupt or talk over your child and afford them the ability to make their own choices and decisions under your guidance. When you show your child respect, they develop a sense of value and importance that helps them in making good life decisions.

Communicate with your child every day. It is through our conversations and discussions with our children that they learn what is expected of them, how they should behave, and how to interact with other people appropriately. Our children will not understand what we expect from them if we have not talked with them calmly about what we need, what we expect and why. Also remember that communication is a two-way conversation. Listening carefully to your child so that you understand their concerns and what they want and need is equally important to successful communication.

Demonstrate for your child appropriate actions and behaviors. You are your child's first teacher and role model. Our children watch everything we do. Remain calm, keep your emotions in check, be polite to others, and treat other people how you want to be treated.

Your child will learn from your positive example and will model their own behavior to match yours.

Encourage your child to explore, to play and have fun, to try new things, make friends, work hard, aim high, create art, music, and poetry, build blocks, dance, etc. When we inspire and support our children in trying new things, we help them develop individual skills and increase creativity. These skills and abilities are what make us each unique contributors to society. Children who receive encouragement from others develop a stronger sense of self-worth and self-esteem, and have an improved overall sense of confidence and well-being.

Praise your child every day. Catch your child in the act of doing something right or positive and praise him! Praising good behavior will make your child want to repeat that behavior and perform other positive behaviors just because you noticed. Honest praise is a strong reward and does not cost a penny. Expressing your approval helps to guide a child in the right direction with their actions and behavior.

Love Unconditionally. Our children will impress us and bring us joy and then turn around and frustrate us and make mistakes. At the end of the day, however, this is your child. Your love is not a reward, but rather a mainstay in your child's life. When other people come and go, insult or injure, support or abandon, your love must be the unchanging constant in your child's life. It may be necessary to inform a child that you do not like a specific behavior, but always let them know that you love them. Your child should be able to count on your love always.

Our children need us every single day. Parenting is both difficult and rewarding and if we make a conscious effort to parent proactively and not just react to our children when they are misbehaving, we and they will be better for it. Responding calmly in a hectic situation takes practice for most people. Allow yourself your own time to grow and improve just as we must provide the opportunity for our children to grow and improve. Remember the words "I am here for you." Our children need us and depend on us and we must provide the parenting that our children deserve. Go ahead...close your eyes, take a deep breath, exhale, and say, "I am here for you". Do it again, if needed, for this is the frame of mind that yields positive results. Now...focus on your child.

EMPOWERING TEENS – Boundaries and Healthy Relationships BY Pauline McGibbon

Once upon a time, a beautiful, independent, self-assured princess happened upon a frog in a pond. The frog said to the princess, "I was once a handsome prince until an evil witch put a spell on me. One kiss from you and I will turn back into a prince and then we can marry, you can attend to my needs, bear my children and forever feel happy doing so." That night, while the princess dined on sautéed frog legs, she kept laughing and saying, "I don't think so."

The problem with fairy tales, and the majority of Disney movies, is how much they endorse stereotypical gender roles. There is always a villain, a helpless female who must be rescued by the hero, no matter how frightened or reluctant he may be.

In the story of the Princess and the Frog, the prince is faced with two negative female characters, the evil witch who puts a curse on him, and the naïve princess, who sacrifices herself by kissing a frog so he may turn into the prince. The only other male role is the patriarch, the king who expects his daughter to be "a good girl" and fulfill a promise, even if the frog manipulated her into making it.

How many women and girls find themselves pressured into the good, self-sacrificing female role, expected to tolerate men crossing a line in their behavior and manipulation by obliging them to do what does not make sense ("kissing the frog") in the name of being a "good girl"? How many fear that if they claim their voice and put a boundary on a man's unacceptable behavior, they will be the "bad, evil witch"?

How many boys feel they have to be the protective prince, who stands for masculinity and strength, who must sacrifice his fears and anxieties to do what is expected of him? How and when do we teach our children that a good prince does not manipulate, nor violate, and definitely does not require the princess to perform an unreasonable act, such as kissing a frog. and that our princesses should know how to create boundaries and stop violations and abuse.

The answer is as early and as age appropriately as possible. Gender stereotyping begins as soon as a baby's gender is found out. If it's a girl, chances are there will be a pink nursery filled with girly decorations, and a toy box with tea sets and dolls. If it's a boy, the nursery is blue, the toy box has animals or dinosaurs; something tough.

By the time adolescence comes, we must be particularly understanding to the pressures on children, and give them support and guidance on establishing boundaries that are healthy and respectful.

Daniel Segal, author of "The Greater Good" discusses the physiological changes that happen in the brains of adolescents, changes that must happen so that children can move away from familiarity and safety and transform into adults. The adolescent brain transforms relationships to look beyond parents and caregivers, towards friends and society, and to establish independence. There are more intense emotions, risk and novelty becomes more compelling as dopamine levels rise so that teens may seek new challenges beyond the familiar, (but also may minimize more negative and dangerous aspects of life). This "hyper-rational" thinking is what causes the teen to drive too fast, take drugs or engage in risky sexual behavior. That is why teens are three times more likely to die or get seriously injured by a preventable cause during adolescence, despite the fact that their bodies are stronger and healthier than at any other time of life. And what makes this worse is peer pressure. Attachments in peers—the need to be seen, safe, soothed and secure. Membership of an adolescent peer group can feel like a matter of life and death, and they can sacrifice morality for membership.

As adults we tend to dismiss adolescent dating relationships as superficial, especially as they may last for very short periods, but these early relationships play a very important role in helping teenagers develop the capacity for long-term, committed relationships in adulthood, and the quality of the relationships they experience in adolescence can have long lasting effects on self-esteem, and help to shape their values on romance, intimacy, and sexuality.

For these early relationships to be healthy, they should be characterized by open communication, trust, and having partners close in age. Adolescents do not automatically know what is right and wrong behavior in a romantic relationship. Without a clear understanding of what a healthy relationship is, they are more likely to tolerate those that put them at risk. For example, the parent who tells their daughter not to worry when a boy at school pulls her hair because it means he likes her and is trying to get her attention, is telling their child very clearly that love and affection is shown thorough violating boundaries and physical abuse; and friends who tell each other that the boyfriend/girlfriend who continually texts, is showing love rather than displaying characteristics of abuse and control.

The most important positive characteristics of safe and healthy dating relationships for teenagers are:

Respect – acceptance for whom and what you are, without pressure to change, conform, or engage in conduct that crosses physical, sexual and emotional boundaries.

Safety – physical and emotional – the power to say “No” and not be subject to physical abuse or emotional blackmail or sexual coercion. Asserting the right to be in a nonviolent relationship

Support – understanding and encouragement; not making one partner responsible for the problems of another. Valuing each other’s friends, families and interests

Individuality – being yourself rather than having to conform to something to please or keep a partner interested; feeling supported and encouraged.

Fairness and Equality – having an equal say and negotiated and agreed decisions, having a balance of giving and receiving

Acceptance – not having to change beliefs or one sided compromise to keep a relationship; feeling comfortable with who you are.

Honesty and Trust – honesty builds trust, and trust leads to feelings of safety and security

Communication – the foundation for any healthy relationship, a willingness to listen without judgment and speak without fear, being able to have an open dialogue and the desire to compromise.

For parents this means being a good role model, sharing responsibilities at home and demonstrating equal relationships between men and women, resolving disagreements in ways that show compromise rather than conflict, being proactive in using “teachable” moments to show respect, resolve problems, develop maturity and self-confidence. Parents can express clear values and expectations. and be keenly aware of outside influences, such as the media, technology, and exposure to negative attitudes and behaviors. When teens are in relationships, parents can get to know that person, and pay attention to their interactions.

Status and self-esteem are intricately linked to a teen’s relationship. Often they may think it is better to be in an abusive relationship, lacking in the positive values, than not being in any relationship. Unhealthy relationships pose very real physical and emotional risks that can have a long lasting impact. Unchallenged, the cycle perpetuates itself onto the next generation. No relationship is perfect, but if it hurts more than it provides affection, joy, and positive feelings, it needs to be re-examined.

It is very important for teenagers to be taught to tell the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to seek help if they have concerns. Parents, schools and community based

education programs are pivotal to this process, and children and teenagers are very receptive to information, they want to interpret and learn. Together adults and adolescents can cultivate social skills and establish supportive relationships. Our brains never stop growing so social engagement, passionate interests, friendships, novelty and creative outlets remain important.

Sources:

Respect Wheel – family Violence Prevention Fund

Adolescent Romantic Relationships, ACT for Youth center of Excellence, Sarah Sorenson

Center for Healthy Relationships, Idaho, factsheets

The Greater Good”, Daniel Segal,

Teen Dating Violence Resources

IF YOU ARE FACED WITH AN EMERGENCY SITUATION DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL 911!

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: 1-866-331-9474 or Text “loveis” to 22522

- Trained peer counselors available to talk to you 24/7 and refer teen victims to agencies in your area.
- www.teensagainstabuse.org
 - Resources available for teens and information on the cycle of violence and how to recognize warning signs of an abusive relationship.
- www.teenrelationships.org
 - Live forum for teens to be able to discuss their abuse and get help. Resources available for what dating violence is and how to stay safe.
- Laurel House (Montgomery County, PA): 1-800-642-3150
 - Domestic violence supportive services for victims and their families.
- Women’s Center of Montgomery County: 1-800-773-2424
 - Domestic violence supportive services for victims and their families.
- Lincoln Center for Family & Youth (Montgomery County, PA): 610-277-3715
 - Offers counseling and in home programs for families in need of supportive services.
- Family Services (Montgomery County, PA): 610-630-2111
 - Family Services cares for children, seniors and families in Montgomery County who face everyday emotional difficulties or physical hardships.

MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



For confidential domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse help or resources:

Do Not Hesitate to CALL 911 In Case of an Emergency or Dangerous Situation!

Laurel House Hotline: 800-642-3150

Women's Center Hotline: 800-773-2424

Victim Service Center: 888-521-0983

Office of Children and Youth: 610-278-5800

PA Child Abuse Hotline: 800-932-0313

Montgomery County Domestic Relations: 610-278-3646

(Child support issues)

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This is Article III

A new article will be published each quarter by The Domestic Violence Legal Network and can be accessed at: www.montcopa.org/DVLN

See newsletter at bottom of DVLN home page for previous articles