

Crisis Connection

Educating against High-tech Abuse

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Cell phones and GPS capability can be lifesavers- except when used by abusive males. Far too frequently these days, teenage boys are using text messaging to harass former girlfriends, and adult batterers are using GPS to monitor the whereabouts of ex-wives or girlfriends. Another less-recognized form of abuse is sleep deprivation via cell phones, when the abuser wakes up the victim by calling at all hours of the night. Because the abuser uses a cell phone, the parents never hear the calls.

Victims report having cell phones with GPS put under their car hoods or cell phones taped under a car. Abusive teens call their girlfriends hundreds of times a day on cell phones. Then, the teens use pagers, telling the girlfriend that if she doesn't respond within a set timeframe, she'll be in trouble. Now, the issue is text messaging. Should the victim not text back, the abusive boyfriend punishes her later.

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, Aja Michael and Angie Dane, educator advocates for the YWCA's new *Domestic Violence Prevention Through Education* program for youth, are doing what they can to make teens aware of how the communication tools they love to use can be used to abuse them instead.

In the last year, they have already conducted 82 sessions at schools throughout six area counties and are scheduled into the fall, with some schools having made

the hour-long presentation part of their curriculum. On average, the educators add one new school a week.

They meet in small groups to talk about how abuse can take different forms- emotional, verbal, sexual and physical- and how to recognize any signs. The two women hold conversations with the students, talking about healthy relationships, the importance of setting boundaries, and the need to stick up for themselves. The educators also provide a list of community resources, including the YWCA's domestic abuse hotline.

Sometimes its girls or boys only, but more frequently the classes are mixed. All questions are submitted anonymously, which, says Michael, builds trust and rapport between the teens and the speakers. "They see that we're not 'old,'" she said. She said candidly that they are so excited to talk about relationships that "they just spill their guts."

Presentations available through Crisis Connection, Inc.

Liz Claiborne's Love Is Not Abuse

In 2006, our agency was picked as a pilot for this program. The *Love Is Not Abuse* program was developed by New York-based Liz Claiborne Inc.; the Education Development Center, a non-profit education and health organization; and *Break the Cycle*, a non-profit group that provides domestic-violence intervention services to youths ages 12 to 22. It focuses on relationship violence.

Media Awareness

Curriculum is focused on how media impacts our society's attitudes, relationships & behavior in regard to issues of sexism, power, control and violence. It speaks to the effects of media (television, advertising, computer images, magazines, music) on our community; particularly, our children.

Internet/Technology Safety

Curriculum helps learn the dangers of technology – safe blogging, proper web surfing, cyberbullying, stalking, etc.

Healthy Relationships

Curriculum identifies what a healthy relationship is and the red flags of unhealthy relationships.

Respect

Curriculum focuses on self-respect, positive self-talk and assertive communication. It can also provide information on dealing with emotions, i.e. anger, frustration, etc.

Natural Helpers

Natural Helpers is a peer based helping program designed for middle and high school students who want to strengthen their communication and helping skills by providing support and service to others. Natural Helpers is based on a simple premise: students naturally seek out other trustworthy students, and occasionally teachers, for advice, assistance, or just a sympathetic ear.

Safety

Curriculum can focus on a variety of issues including community safety, cell phone safety, resources available; college safety

Please visit our website @ www.crisisconnectioninc.org and see "Speakers" for additional booking and scheduling information.



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