

# 4 Building Blocks for Understanding Teen Dating Violence

## 1. You are not alone.

Our society often glorifies violence, but then looks the other way & rejects those who are victims of violence, especially victims of interpersonal or sexual violence. Because of this attitude, many people are so ashamed of having been battered that they will not tell even their closest friends. The abuser often isolates the victim or threatens her with harm if she does tell anyone. As a result, many victims think that they are the only one involved with an abuser. It is a great relief to find out there are many others dealing with abuse.

## 2. The abuse is not your fault.

Everyone's heard the phrase, "You made me do it," or "You pressed my buttons," or "You've got to learn who's boss." All too often the abuser will blame the victim for the abuse. The guilt placed on the victim is a tremendous burden and is the number one cause for lower self-image in victims. Perpetrators are always responsible for their actions. The abuse is not the fault of the victim.

## 3. If it feels scary, it's abuse.

If you are touched in a personal way that feels scary to you, then it's abuse. If you are touched in a personal way that feels uncomfortable to you, then it's abuse. If you are touched in a personal way that feels bad to you, then it's abuse.

## 4. Get some help & support for yourself.

Most abusers refuse to seek help because they don't realize how bad their problem is. Victims often feel too embarrassed or scared to seek help. They also may not realize how bad the problem is. Try to get help from organizations like teen health centers, your local battered women's program, or crisis lines. There are laws to protect victims, shelters for battered women, support groups, and sympathetic people willing just to listen.