

Abuse can annihilate adolescent innocence

By: Elliott Mumm, Editor-in-chief

Healthy relationships support teenagers as they mature into adults, and many psychologists devote their careers to studying the relationships teens have with their parents and friends. But few actually study adolescent romantic relationships.

Thao Ha, a professor in the Department of Psychology at Arizona State University, is one of the few. He studies how experiences in adolescent romantic relationships like conflict and breakups influence mental health, promote physical health, and affect engagement in school. He says, "Your brain and emotions are still developing during your teen years, so relationships can feel very intense. The intensity isn't always a bad thing, it just means feelings can be stronger and sometimes harder to manage."

These relationships can have positive effects such as boosting self-confidence and self-esteem and making one feel supported, valued, and understood; they can also teach communication skills and emotional maturity, and they can reduce loneliness, which many teens suffer from, in part, from the isolating effectings of social media and constant cell phone use.

But, there can also be negative effects such as sadness, anxiety, stress, jealousy, insecurity, lowered self confidence, emotional distress, and pressure to fit in or meet expectations, all of which can increase anxiety. These thoughts of anxiety or insecurity have the potential to leak into teens' physical health. Ha notes that, for many teens, this type of worry causes them to stop eating normally, potentially starving themselves because they are so nervous to mess up or so overcome with fear that their partner may leave them.

Ha says, "Being this dependent on one's partner when you're a teenager is not healthy because you're still trying to figure out who you want to be. You also may start to draw yourself away from your friends and family for someone who may just get up and walk out. You should not have to change for someone to meet their standards." He concludes, "You should always strive to be yourself."

Ha also warns that these kind of toxic teen relationships can often result in significant, widespread hardship with 1 in 3 U.S. teens experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and up to 25% of young people, as a result, engaging in self harm. Additionally, 1 in 10 high schoolers report suicidal thoughts, often linked to relationship-induced stress. About 70% of girls and 52% of boys in these tumultuous relationships also report physical injury from their partner.

25%

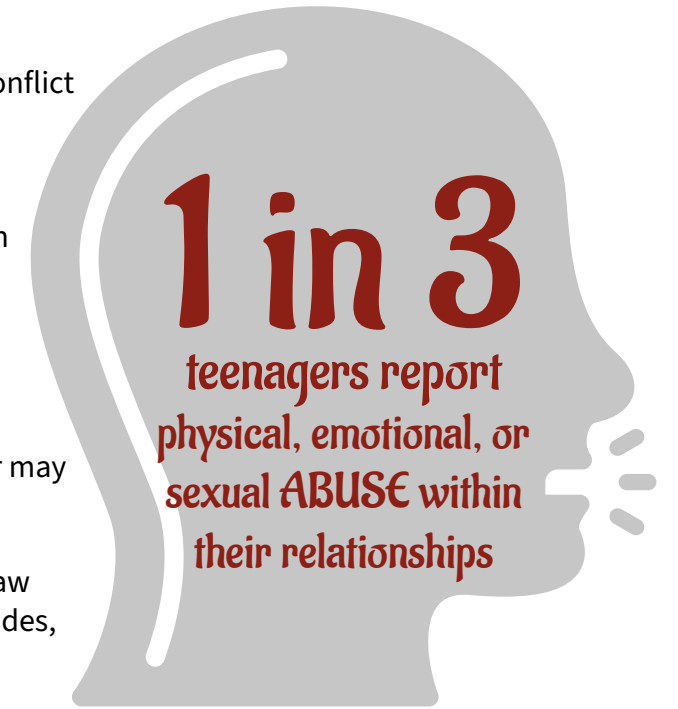
of teens in **UNHEALTHY**
relationships turn to self harm.

Roughly 25% of teens report self harm related to relationship breakups, and 9.9% report suicidal thoughts stemming from these issues.

But teens can also be in postive, healthy relationships which can give them significant fulfillment and a stable outlook. Ha shares, "Support from a romantic partner at age 17 is linked to better mental health and psychological functioning at ages 25-27. Supportive romantic partners also help reduce the negative impact of daily stressors, which can otherwise increase anxiety and depression in teens."

Ultimately, Ha says that the most significant factor to consider is mental health when determining the benefit (or danger) of a relationship. "If you notice yourself withdrawing, feeling extra anxious, or engaging in negative self-talk, it is probably time to re-evaluate whether you should be in this relationship in the first place. And if you are being harmed, emotionally or physically, get out! Speak to a trusted adult in your life. It's never too late to seek help."

Teens should remember that they are constantly changing and growing and their whole lives are ahead of them. If anyone is trying to hold them back, they are the ones in charge of their lives, and they can retake control.



Teen relationships are hard; some stay, and some go. In high school, being in a relationship is a lot different than adulthood; you have classes, hormones, grades, friends, jobs, and many other stressors.

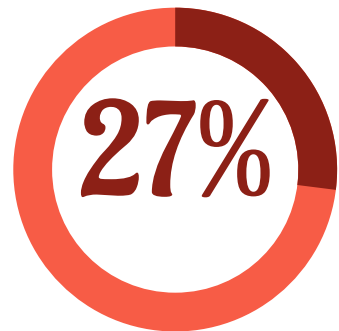
Being in a teen relationship is great, on paper, but on the other hand, it is a distraction to school and teen life. As a teenager, you need to focus on getting into a good college, doing well in activities, and even working. And toxic teen relationships can ambush that.

Relationships require constant communication and attention, which some people do not have time or patience for. When you have someone on your mind, it is hard to focus on more important things. If you are in class taking a test and you have something else on your mind, it will affect your mentality and your focus.

Statistically, 90% of teens in unhealthy relationships face educational challenges, while 27% report the social media activity of their partner causes jealousy, insecurity, or constant surveillance, creating intense, distracting, and often toxic environments.



of teens in abusive relationships face educational challenges



of teens report social media being a root cause of jealousy and unhealthy dynamics

However, this is not true for all relationships; some people are good at multitasking their priorities and understanding what is important at specific times. It is a compulsive and human need to want to be liked or loved and to feel validated, so it sprouts into a teen relationship.

In reality teenagers need to focus on more Important things like schooling and activities. Sometimes, when there are hormones and misunderstandings involved in relationships, it snowballs into a toxic doom loop. Before getting into a relationship, it is important to know who you are personally and what you want so you do not hurt other people.

It is also important not to play with someone's feelings and manipulate their desires. You need to be understanding and open to someone's needs and feelings offer them open communication, so relationships become strong and healthy.

Crucially, you must understand who you are and how you work before getting into a relationship. Gaining confidence and loyalty to yourself is incredibly important. If you are in a teen relationship, make sure you make time for your school work, your job, your friends, and most importantly, yourself. Understanding yourself and becoming comfortable and confident with who you are is key to any successful relationship.

Young love fosters future flourishing

By Olivia Erdman, Staff Reporter

During your childhood you learn to create safe and healthy relationships with friends, parents, caregivers, and teachers.

In a 2025 report, The Office of Population Affairs says these relationships you are building with adults, like parents, caregivers, or coaches, are building blocks for future success in relationships, especially romantic ones.

One thing about teenagers is the amount of stress they can have, but, sometimes, a healthy relationship can alleviate, even prevent that stress in the first place. Having good relationships is really helpful if you are having a hard time in your life because you know you can talk to someone when you need to.

And it is these healthy relationships where children and teens feel safe and show respect for themselves and others.

Healthy relationships can also help you develop social skills and grow emotionally. Naturally, as teens get older, they become more interested in dating and wanting a relationship.

In a December 4, 2025 post, the Newport Editorial Team says, "For teens ages 13-17 years old, about two-thirds of them have never been in a romantic relationship." So they often don't know how to behave in one. But, by being in one, they start to learn.

Relationships can show change in behavior by acting more distracted, anxious, and staying up late. And, if something were to happen like getting into an argument, it is better to talk about it and figure it out than not doing anything and letting it get worse.

Being in a high school relationship teaches you that having good communication skills is very important to having strong, health relationships.

Once teens get comfortable with each other they may explore more intimate things like sexual activity, which carries risks. The teen brain is still developing so before engaging in any mature behavior speak to a parent or counselor. Take this opportunity to figure out what you want and to set yourself up for future success.

2/3 of teenagers have never been in a romantic relationship

Assess risks; communicate clearly