

# BEST FRIENDS FOUNDATION



“Best Friends for the Best Future”

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\* In Memorium

## Welcome to the Best Friends Foundation Seminar

For over 35 years the Best Friends Foundation ("BFF") has served approximately 47,000 adolescents in the District of Columbia public schools and sites across the country. Our staff takes great pride in the fact that Georgetown University research demonstrated that the BFF curriculum has significantly reduced at-risk behavior and increased positive peer relationships. In response to the current issue of adolescent violence and abusive behavior, the Best Friends Foundation has developed the high school **Bullying and Relationship Violence Seminar: Stop the Silence, Prevent the Violence.**

As you can see from the attached data summary, the Best Friends Foundation had much success this past school year in providing schoolwide programs designed to reduce violence and bullying. As a result, after the BFF seminar, **83% of our participants stated they would not be a bystander to violence and "would help someone being bullied."** Currently, there are no other effective data driven programs in the metropolitan (DMV) public schools addressing this growing and dangerous issue.

**The National Center for Education Statistics** reported that bullying occurs at least once a week in 28% of middle schools. Cyberbullying, increasingly more common, occurred at least once per week in 37% of middle schools and 25% of high schools. Previously thought to "diminish over time," a review of longitudinal studies on bullying and subsequent outcomes revealed that the negative impacts could be experienced years later. From missing school to devastating psychological distress, **the consequences of bullying are so detrimental that scholars refer to it as a public health problem.**

The Seminar agenda includes a Best Friends Foundation musical presentation of 'Make Music, Not Madness', an uplifting and inspirational song and dance production which involves large-scale student participation. Student interaction is greatly encouraged with the use of question and answer opportunities and resource information is given to the students for follow up and guidance.

If you have any questions regarding the Best Friends Foundation seminar and your students' participation, please contact us at 202-274-1835 for more information.

With best wishes for the best future for our youth,

Elayne Bennett  
President and Founder

*EAGLE* foresight | *TORCH* leadership | *LION* courage | *GAVEL* truth | *HEART* friendship | *ANCHOR* stability | *BOOK* knowledge

**Over 35 years of Serving Youth**

[www.bestfriendsfoundation.org](http://www.bestfriendsfoundation.org)

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Washington, DC 20015

# BFF LEADERSHIP CREED



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## **EAGLE: FORESIGHT FOR THE FUTURE**

I will learn from my mistakes and strive to be a better person.  
I will study harder to reach my goals.  
I will think about my actions and how they may affect my future.



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## **LION: STRENGTH AND COURAGE**

I have not succeeded until I help someone else succeed.  
I will not give into peer pressure to engage in risk behavior. I will help friends in need, and will not be a bystander to bullying and/or relationship violence. I will show courage when I face challenges in life.



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## **ANCHOR: STABILITY**

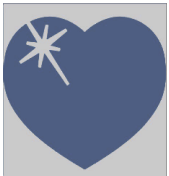
I will control my actions, my emotions, and my words.  
I will be ethical in my deeds.  
I will stand up for what is right.



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## **GAVEL: TRUTH AND JUSTICE**

I will take responsibility for everything I do.  
I will be fair in my dealings with others.  
I will be honest with myself.  
I will speak truthfully about myself and others.



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## **HEART — FRIENDSHIP AND CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS**

I will be the best kind of friend who encourages my friend to be a better person.  
I will value my peers feelings and will show thoughtfulness and empathy for others.



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## **BOOK — KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING**

I will be enthusiastic and ready to learn when I come into school.  
I will work hard to reach my goals.  
I will set short and long-term goals to become ready for higher learning and my future vocation..



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## **TORCH — LEADERSHIP AND SHOWING OTHERS THE WAY**

I will stand up for what is right and try to lead by example. I will encourage my peers to work to succeed and to seek help if they are in need. I will not give in to peer pressure to engage in the risk behaviors that could have an impact on my clarity of thought and action.



# TRAITS OF A LEADER

**leader:** *n. one who guides or is in command; one in a position of influence or importance; a role model.*

- **A Leader is honest and fair.**
- **A Leader listens and asks questions.**
- **A Leader develops a plan.**
- **A Leader has courage.**
- **A Leader has vision for the future and sets long term goals.**
- **A Leader sets objectives and follows them through to completion.**
- **A Leader can be assertive when needed.**
- **A Leader treats others with respect and dignity.**
- **A Leader admits to a mistake and takes responsibility for his or her actions.**
- **A Leader hears a problem and creates a solution.**
- **A Leader has integrity and can be trusted.**
- **A Leader inspires and motivates others to take action in pursuit of the common good.**
- **A leader has self-control.**
- **A leader stands up for what is right.**



# FACTS ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE

It's very likely that you or someone you know has been abused in a relationship. Dating violence isn't just physical. It can include mental/emotional abuse and sexual abuse. It can occur in casual dating or serious long-term relationships.

## **MENTAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE**

**Mental/Emotional abuse includes:**

- Embarrassing you
- Put-downs
- Cussing
- Controlling you
  - Making you feel bad
- about yourself
- Keeping you away from other friends and family

Threats of violence are abuse and should always be taken seriously.

## **PHYSICAL ABUSE**

**Physical abuse includes:**

- Hitting
- Slapping
- Punching
- Shoving
- Kicking
- Biting
- Hair-pulling
- Using a weapon against a boyfriend/girlfriend

Both teenage boys and girls report being victims of physical violence in relationships. Normally, boys and girls use physical force for different reasons and with different results. Teens usually act violently because they are angry; boys are much more likely to use force in order to control their girlfriends, while girls more often act violently in self-defense.

Teenage girls suffer more from relationship violence, emotional and physical. Teenage girls are more likely than boys to have serious injuries and to report being terrified. In contrast, boys seldom seem to fear violence by their girlfriends, often saying that the attacks did not hurt and that it was funny.

## **SEXUAL ABUSE**

Sexual abuse is forced or unwanted sexual activity or rape. It is sexual abuse to force or pressure someone to engage in sexual activity. Trying to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol is also sexual abuse. Girls in opposite-sex relationships are much more likely than boys to suffer from sexual abuse.

## **HOW FREQUENTLY DOES DATING VIOLENCE OCCUR?**

This is a difficult question to answer because some studies only ask about physical abuse, while others include questions about men-tal/emotional abuse and sexual violence. Past estimates of dating violence among middle school and high school students range from 28% to 96%.

One recent national survey found that 1 in 11 high school students said they had been hit, slapped, or physically abused in the past year. 1 in 11 students also reported that they had been forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to. 96% of teens report mental/emo-tional abuse in their dating relationships.

# What You Can Do

## KNOW THE EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- You are pressured to make the relationship very serious or to have sex early in the relationship.
- Extreme jealousy and possessiveness, saying these emotions are signs of love.
- Controlling you and forcefully making all decisions where the two of you are concerned.
- Refusing to consider your point of view or desires.
- Keeping you from spending time with close friends or family.
- Verbal abuse, including yelling, cussing, manipulation, spreading rumors and making you feel guilty.
- Drinking too much or using drugs and then blaming the alcohol and drugs for his/her behavior.
- Threatening physical violence.
- Previous abuse of a boyfriend/girlfriend or defending violence by others.

If you're in a relationship that in any way feels uncomfortable, awkward, tense or even scary, trust your feelings and get out. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

Always remember: You have every right to say no! No boyfriend or girlfriend has the right to tell you what you can or should do, what you can or should wear, or what kind of friends you should have.

## IF YOU ARE IN A VIOLENT, OR POTENTIALLY VIOLENT, RELATIONSHIP, DO THIS:

Make a safety plan and get help. Talk with someone you trust: a teacher, guidance counselor, doctor, friend or parent. Contact the police or a local domestic violence center or call the *National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE*. Realize that violence will not just stop or go away. You cannot change your boyfriend/girlfriend by changing your behavior. You are not responsible for the abuse. Your boyfriend/girlfriend may need counseling or other help to change.

## WATCH FOR FRIENDS WHO ARE ABUSED

Friends in abusive relationships may:

- ★ Change their clothing or makeup.
- ★ Lose confidence in themselves.
- ★ Have difficulty making decisions.
- ★ Stop spending time with you and other friends.
- ★ Receive failing grades or quit school activities; and
- ★ Turn to using alcohol or drugs.

If you think a friend is in an abusive relationship, try asking them:

- ♥ "You don't seem as happy as usual – are you okay?"
- ♥ "Is there anything you want to talk about?"

This indirect approach may prompt your friend to reveal what's wrong. Listen without judging, condemning, or giving unwanted advice. If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she take the steps listed above in order to find help. If you believe your friend is in serious danger, tell an adult you trust immediately. Do not try to "rescue" your friend and try to handle the situation on your own.

**TAKE ACTION IF YOU SUSPECT THAT SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING ABUSIVE.**

If you feel you are not in danger, talk to the person about his or her use of violence. Make sure that the person understands that it is both wrong and illegal. If the person is ready to make a change, help him/her get help.

**IF YOU ARE HURTING SOMEONE ELSE, HAVE THE COURAGE TO GET HELP!**

No matter what the other person does to provoke you. No matter how justified you feel. No matter what your friends do. It is never okay to harm someone else. Remember that violence is illegal and can land you in jail. You can learn new ways to:

- Deal with your anger
- Fight fair
- Communicate better
- Give and get love in relationships

Don't let shame or fear stop you. Talk to a parent, teacher, religious leader, doctor, nurse or guidance counselor immediately.

Or, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **(800) 799-SAFE**. They can direct you to individuals and groups in your community who can help you to make a change.

**HELP EDUCATE OTHER TEENS ABOUT DATING VIOLENCE**

Counsel peers, staff a hotline, or speak to classes about the signs of an abusive relationship and where to find help. Encourage your church or school to develop programs to educate teens about dating violence, and work to make sure that there are resources for abused teens in your community.

National Domestic Violence Hotline  
**(800) 799-SAFE**

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*Information provided by the Dibble Fund with permission from the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. For additional information, please visit [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org).*

