

12-2020

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Increasing College Students' Awareness on Dating Violence

Brianne Day

A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

College students often lack awareness on how to identify the signs of abusive dating behavior and what to do when dating violence does occur. Consequently, many college students may fall victim to dating violence whether it is physical, sexual, verbal or controlling abuse. According to Knowledge Networks (2011), over 43% of college women have reported experiencing dating violence and over 57% of college students believe it is difficult to recognize the signs of dating violence. To address the lack of awareness, I created an interactive presentation for college students at Gavilan College in Gilroy, California on how to identify the signs of dating violence and how to maintain healthy relationships.

Needs Statement

Many college students are unaware of the skills it takes to be in a healthy romantic relationship and may not recognize the signs of dating violence. Dating violence is a form of intimate partner violence that occurs in a dating relationship where physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal abuse is present (Anasuri, 2016). Dating violence is common among college students as they start to engage in dating, relationships, and/or hookups. Youth begin to experience an increase in independence from their family and have access to a wider range of potential dating partners during their college experience. However, increased dating may also result in increased risk of violence. According to Anasuri (2016), over 32% of students experience some form of dating violence while in a college environment. All while, few students recognize abusive behavior making it harder to identify verbal and emotional abuse that comprises dating violence.

When youth enter college, they are far more likely to engage in 'hook up' culture or become involved in a relationship. A study showed that over 70% of college students reported

that they have had a hook up experience (Sutton & Simons, 2014). 'Hook up' culture focuses on the idea and beliefs of engaging in casual encounters that range from kissing to sexual intercourse, without expecting a committed relationship afterwards (Sutton & Simon, 2014). The term 'hooking up' can indicate something different for each individual and could create negative interactions if boundaries were crossed. Studies have shown that 'hook up' culture plays a dangerous role where predatory men have access to vulnerable women (Sutton & Simon, 2014). Youth who lack awareness on this type of environment may fall victim to abusive behaviors that are uncommon to them. Identifying the signs of dating violence will help enhance their knowledge to prevent violent interactions and maintain personal boundaries.

Because youth are just emerging from adolescence as they enter college, they may lack experience in romantic relationships and in understanding themselves in a relationship. Youth are forming relationships to fill various needs whether it is affection, love, comfort, etc., but youth must first understand themselves before exploring what they want or need from others in a relationship (Rosenberger, 2011). In college, relationships tend to be a new experience for youth where they have yet to establish how they communicate with a partner when a conflict arises. Communicating the importance of boundaries between oneself and their partner can determine the success of a healthy romantic relationship. For each person in the relationship, setting boundaries allows them to "decide where his or her comfort zone lies" (Rosenberger, 2011, p. 14). As romantic relationships begin, students must first establish the boundaries of their relationship to decrease the likelihood of experiencing dating violence. By improving relationship skills and identifying dating violence signs, youth may be able to establish and sustain a healthy relationship as they determine and set boundaries for these relationships.

While in college and being away from family, youth tend to rely on fellow peers for emotional and social support. The impact of educating youth on dating violence can help promote how they take action when a fellow peer reaches out to them for support. If youth are not aware of how to interact with a peer experiencing dating violence, they may disregard the situation, falling into the bystander effect. The bystander effect takes place when an individual witnesses a situation but fails to help the victim because they believe that others will intervene instead (Alegría et al, 2017). When effective bystanders recognize signs of dating violence, it can empower them to use their skills and prevent the situation from escalating (Alegría et al, 2017). With college campuses having a high risk setting for dating violence, it is necessary to advocate for effective intervention programs to address the problem. Peterson et al. (2018) stated that implementing bystander education and awareness programs concurrently, resulted in positive outcomes that changed the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors around dating. As youth rely on one another for support, it has shown that it is important to establish a sense of safety and respect between each other when disclosing their experience within dating violence.

Given that youth are likely involved in romantic relationships during college, they may not be aware of the signs of dating violence which hinders them from having healthy romantic relationships. In order to increase awareness and enhance their ability to engage in healthy relationships, I have created a interactive presentation that focuses on relationships and dating violence for students at Gavilan College in Gilroy, California.

Theory & Consideration of Diversity

As youth are emerging into young adults, they are developmentally between both Erikson's Identity vs. Role Confusion and Intimacy vs. Isolation stages of Psychosocial Development. In Identity vs. Role Confusion, youth focus on establishing their own identity,

forming new ideas, and exploring new life transitions. Youth are concerned with who they are in this world and are seeking out their own independence to make life decisions (Sokol, 2009). This new found sense of identity is not only constructed from their own ideas but also through society, whether that is through family, peers, or outside influences. In Intimacy vs. Isolation, youth concentrate on creating healthy relationships, whether it is friendships or intimate relationships. Erikson emphasized that any hardships in successfully completing the Identity vs. Role Confusion stage could ultimately lead to isolation and fear when it came to relationships in the Intimacy vs. Isolation stage (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). Youth that have not resolved their identity would be hampered in contributing to a healthy relationship.

In a college setting, youth are introduced to a diverse environment that can generate new identity concerns as they make life decisions, such as romantic relationships (Sokol, 2009). The failure to develop a strong identity can shape the way they manage romantic relationships, as youth begin the transition to college. This environment provides youth with a new sense of independence that allows them to reflect and discover their true sense of self. The impact of 'hook up' culture and their fellow peers can also play an important role in how they shape their identity and develop relationships. Because of the lack of life experiences, youth will continue to examine what they want for themselves but will ultimately be influenced by their surroundings.

Since youth also have the ability to explore various romantic partners in a college setting, they may become vulnerable to dating violence. With a lack of understanding around dating violence and having not completely formed an identity, youth may be limited in their abilities to establish healthy boundaries within relationships. Having an understanding of their own self awareness and identifying what they need from a partner may allow youth to maintain long-lasting relationships (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010). Therefore, I am creating a

interactive presentation that helps youth develop healthy romantic relationships skills and how to recognize the signs of dating violence.

Consideration of Diversity

My project will be conducted in the COUN 50: Guidance/First Year course at Gavilan College in Gilroy, California. According to Student Success Initiative (2019), the ethnic composition of students at Gavilan College is 5% Asian, 58.9% Hispanic, 2.4% African American, 26.9% White, 1.9% Filipino, and 3.1% of Two or more races. In addition, Gavilan College has 52% female students compared to 46% male students. According to the Student Success Initiative (2019), Gavilan College has 25.2% students less than 20 years old, 26.3% students between 20-24 years old, 30.5% students between 25-39 years old, and 18% of students over 40 years old. I would expect that the participants will be reflective of the overall composition of Gavilan College. However, the Guidance/First Year course is a requirement for all freshman college students so the presentation may not apply to the older adults as they may be married or in a committed relationship.

For my presentation, comprehension of English would be required as I will ask the participants to read, speak, and write in English. So, participants who are not English proficient will be excluded from participation. In addition, the ratio of women to men could be disproportionate in the course, as there is a higher amount of females at Gavilan College. It may be likely that the class setting would be mainly women or individuals who identify as a different gender. Since dating violence and romantic relationships happens between both sexes, it would be important to have an equal amount between the two. Since the presentation will be conducted in a college setting, there is a possibility that students may vary in age and the content may not pertain to their life. My presentation focuses on heterosexual relationships and may

inadvertently exclude individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the content does focus on healthy relationship skills, where LGBTQ+ individuals could utilize in their relationships but the signs of dating violence may be different in LGBTQ+ relationships in comparison to heterosexual relationships.

Learning Outcomes

I intend to facilitate a 2 hour interactive presentation to college-level students at Gavilan College.

By the end of the project, participants will:

1. Identify one warning sign of dating violence
2. Indicate one healthy relationship skill to maintain a romantic relationship
3. Indicate one bystander intervention strategy

Method

First, I would introduce myself to the participants, explain why I am there, and provide an overview of the topic. I would inform the class that it is sensitive content and may be difficult for some of the participants. Next, I would begin the presentation where I would focus on relationships and dating violence. See Appendix A. Then, on slide #2, we would review statistics on the prevalence of dating in college and we would discuss what 'hookup' culture is in college. Next, I would provide data on students who have experienced dating violence and those of who do not recognize the warning signs. Then, for slide #3, I would provide the class with a definition of dating violence from <https://www.breakthecycle.org/learn-about-dating-abuse>. As a class, we would discuss the different forms of abuse and move onto slide #4 where I would provide the class with common warning signs of dating violence. Once we have examined dating violence, we would discuss the importance of understanding the relationship spectrum on slide #5. We would discuss how conflict is inevitable in every relationship but it is how couples fight that

ultimately determines where they fall on that spectrum. Next, we discuss how developing healthy relationships skills can help maintain our romantic relationships. Then, on slide #6, I would provide the class with relationships skills that can be used to dissolve conflict in a relationship.

Once we have a understanding of the warning signs of dating violence and the healthy relationship skills used to dissolve conflict, we would practice some scenarios for each. Next, I would inform the class that I would read two scenarios for dating violence and want them to identify the warning signs for each scenario. See Appendix B. Once the class identified the signs, we would discuss why this is a form of dating violence. Next, I would inform the class that I would read two scenarios where couples are experiencing conflict and want them to distinguish what skills are being used to dissolve their argument. See Appendix C. Once the class identified the skills being used, we would discuss why these are healthy relationship skills to use. After the discussion is completed, I would ask the class to shout out who they turn to for emotional and social support. Once they provide their answers, I would move on to slide #8 to discuss the importance of being an active bystander and define the bystander effect from <https://stopthehurt.org/bystander-intervention/>. We would discuss how peers turn to each other for emotional support and how to communicate to peers who may be experiencing dating violence. On slide #9, I would then provide several bystander intervention techniques that they can use to reach out and support others if they believed they recognized signs of dating violence. Once we have a understanding on the techniques, we would then practice two different scenarios where these bystander techniques can be used. See Appendix D. I will read out two scenarios and have the class shout out what would be the appropriate thing to say to them.

Once these are completed, I would introduce them to my closing activity, on slide #11, where they each will receive a post it note and a pen. I then explain that I would want them to fill

in the blank with their own interpretation, of LOVE is _____. I want the presentation to end on a uplifting note that ultimately shows them that love can defined in many different ways and they set their own boundaries. Afterwards, I would thank the class for participating in my presentation and on slide #12 I would provide them with local and national resources for them to take a picture of and/or distribute hardcopies of that specific presentation page if need be.

Results

Results could not be completed due to COVID 19

Discussion

Discussion could not be completed due to COVID 19

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Appendix A

Gavilan College Presentation

A Relationship Spectrum

#LoveShouldntHurt

Brienne Day
Gavilan College Presentation

Relationships & Dating

- Dating & 'hookup culture' is highly prevalent during college.
- Over 70% of college students have had some sort of hook-up experience.
- Over 43% of college women and 28% of college men have experienced either abuse or controlling behavior in a relationship.
- Nearly 89% of college students are NOT confident to recognize the warning signs of dating violence!

(Statton & Shook, 2019)
(BreaktheCycle)

What is Dating Violence?

A pattern of physically, sexually, or emotionally abusive behavior over a period of time that is used to exert power and control over a current or past dating partner.

FORMS OF ABUSE

STOP!
NO!

SEXUAL ABUSE

VERBAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

FINANCIAL ABUSE

DIGITAL ABUSE

STALKING

Warning Signs

- Physically inflicting pain or hurt
- Explosive temper
- Checking of cell phone, emails, or social media
- Isolation from friends & family
- Betlittling or put-downs
- Possessiveness
- Controlling behavior
- Threatens violence

Relationship Spectrum

- Relationships fall on a spectrum anywhere from healthy, unhealthy, or abusive.
- Conflict in relationships is inevitable BUT how a couple fights can determine where they fall on the spectrum.
- Healthy relationships take time & effort from both partners.
- Distinguishing what skills help maintain relationships allows for more positive interactions between partners.

Healthy Relationship Skills

- Using "I" statements instead of you statements
- Developing boundaries
- Accept & negotiate differences
- Be confident in speaking up
- Communicate
- Be present in the conversation

Let's identify the warning signs OR relationships skills for different scenarios!

Let's examine different scenarios!

Let's LEARN!

7

The Bystander Effect

When a person witnesses someone is in need of help but does not engage, thinking someone else will intervene.

Bystander Interventions allows YOU to be an advocate in preventing further harm towards others.

Bystander Intervention starts with YOU

StopTheHurt.Org

8

Bystander Intervention Techniques

- Express concern
- Trust your gut
- Listen
- Focus on the feelings of the survivor rather than your own.
- Support their decisions
- Ask what you can do for them

9

Let's practice our bystander techniques!

What would YOU do?
What would YOU say?

Let's LEARN!

10

Closing Activity

- Everyone grab a post it note & marker
- Fill in the blank with your own answer

LOVE is _____

LovelsRespect.Org

Thank You!

Local Resources:

Community Solutions – Gilroy, CA
877-363-7238 (24/7)

Monterey County Rape Crisis Center
831-375-4357

24/7 NATIONAL HOTLINES

TEEN DATING ABUSE HELPLINE: 1-866-331-9474
Speak with peer advocates about dating relationships, and abuse.

NL: SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE: 1-800-656-4673
24/7, confidential support for people in distress and prevention and crisis resources.

TREVOR LINE: 1-866-688-7386
A crisis intervention and suicide prevention phone service for LGBTQ youth.

NL: SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE: 1-800-273-8255
24/7, confidential support for people in distress and prevention and crisis resources.

NL: RUNAWAY SAFELINE: 1-800-786-2929
Share your story with a compassionate person and build a plan together.

NL: HOTLINE FOR CRIME VICTIMS: 1-855-484-2846
Confidential support for crime victims.

NL: STREET HARASSMENT HOTLINE: 1-855-897-5910
Support, advice, and information for people experiencing gender-based street harassment.

For more information:
<https://www.breakthecycle.org>

*Appendix B**Dating Violence Scenario #1*

Lauren and Peter have been dating for seven months, things seem to be going great. She loves fashion and likes styling various outfits. Peter tells Lauren that she looks better in pants than in shorts/skirts and doesn't want her showing skin. Peter tells her she is beautiful but she needs to stop wearing so much makeup, he doesn't like it. Now, Lauren dresses the way Peter likes so he will find her more attractive.

Dating Violence Scenario #2

Sarah and John have been hooking up for over a year, but not exclusively dating. Sarah wants to be in a committed relationship with John but he wants to be single during college. Since John does not want a relationship, Sarah has chosen to no longer spend time around him. John is upset and he now seems to always be around wherever Sarah goes and constantly calls her. One night at a party, Sarah allows John to take her home and he tries to hook up with her, thinking it would be just like their previous encounters before but Sarah says no and tells him to leave. John begins to yell at Sarah, blaming her for mixed signals and says "she has never complained before". As John starts to leave her house, John continues to yell at Sarah and destroys several of her belongings.

*Appendix C**Healthy Relationship Skill Scenario #1*

Alex and Taylor are having an argument about household tasks. Taylor feels that she does the majority of the chores and Alex doesn't help enough. Alex works two jobs and is too tired to help. Taylor says 'I feel unappreciated when I do the chores because I would like for us to share these tasks together'. Alex says 'When I come home from work, I feel disrespected when comments are made about me being lazy or unhelpful'. They agree to be nicer and create a chore list to help each other.

Healthy Relationship Skill Scenario #2

Abby and Chris just started dating in their sophomore year of college. This is both Chris and Abby's first real relationship. Abby is having fun at college with her friends and likes to socialize at parties. Chris is the same way but he would like to have more time for just the two of them. One night, Chris expresses to Abby that he wants to spend time with her without other people around all the time. Abby believes that Chris does not like her friends and does not want to get to know them. This ultimately results in an argument between the two of them & the silent treatment begins. Chris decides to be the first to speak up and communicates that he enjoys hanging out with her friends but he would like to spend alone time with her to further their relationship. Abby expresses that she too would like to get to know him better and that they should set up a weekly date night for the two of them. They both agree that they can still spend time apart with their friends but also make time for each other.

*Appendix D**Bystander Intervention Scenario #1*

A friend has just expressed to you that their partner has been going through their cell phone. It resulted in an argument & their partner started to throw things at the wall, saying "You are lucky that it's the wall & not you". Your friend expresses that their partner apologized & said they won't do it again. Your friend does not know what to do & asks for your advice. What do you say?

Bystander Intervention Scenario #2

Your best friend started dating someone and everything seems perfect. They post pictures together on social media and they express to you how happy they are. A month goes by and you realize you haven't spoken to your friend for a while. They aren't as active on social media anymore and has become distant towards all their friends. Even their family has expressed that they aren't around a lot anymore. You aren't sure if something is wrong but you can't stop thinking about it. What do you do?

Appendix E

Capstone Festival Presentation

Increasing College Students' Awareness on Dating Violence

California State University, Monterey Bay

Brianna Day

1

Need Statement

- As youth enter college, many enter romantic relationships but may not recognize the warning signs that can occur in an unhealthy/abusive relationship.
- Over 32% of college students experience some form of dating violence.
- Over 57% of students believe it is difficult to recognize the warning signs for dating violence (Knowledge Networks, 2011)

2

Dating Violence

A pattern of physically, sexually, or emotionally abusive behavior over a period of time that is used to exert power and control over a current or past dating partner.

FORMS OF ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE

VERBAL ABUSE

PHYSICAL ABUSE

FINANCIAL ABUSE

DIGITAL ABUSE

STALKING

3

Erik Erikson: Psychosocial Development

Stage 5
Identity vs. Role Confusion

<p>Q Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sense of self • Explore new life transitions 	<p>Q Role Confusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self doubt • Lack purpose
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Stage 6
Intimacy vs Isolation

<p>Q Intimacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy romantic relationships • Solid social support network 	<p>Q Isolation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle to develop relationships • Left feeling lonely
--	---

4

Method

Gavilan College, Gilroy CA

Incoming Freshman Students

Two hour Presentation with Interactive Activities

5

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the presentation, participants will be able to:

- Q Identify one warning sign of dating violence
- Q Indicate one healthy relationship skill to maintain a romantic relationship
- Q Indicate one bystander intervention strategy

6

Learning Outcome 1

LO 1: Warning Signs of Dating Violence

- Physically inflicting pain or hurt
- Explosive temper
- Checking of cell phone, emails, or social media
- Isolation from friends & family
- Belittling or put-downs
- Possessiveness
- Controlling behavior
- Threatens violence

7

Learning Outcome 1

LO 1: Identify one warning sign of dating violence

Q Lauren and Peter have been dating for seven months, things seem to be going great. She loves fashion and likes styling various outfits. Peter tells Lauren that she looks better in pants than in shorts/skirts and doesn't want her showing skin. Peter tells her she is beautiful but needs to stop wearing so much makeup, he doesn't like it. Now, Lauren dresses the way Peter likes so he will find her more attractive.

8

Learning Outcome 2

LO 2: Healthy Relationship Skills

- Using I statements instead of you statements
- Developing boundaries
- Accept & negotiate differences
- Be confident in speaking up
- Communicate
- Be present in the conversation

9

Learning Outcome 2

LO 2: Indicate one healthy relationship skill to maintain a romantic relationship

Q Alex and Taylor are having an argument about household tasks. Taylor feels that she does the majority of the chores and Alex doesn't help enough. Alex works two jobs and is too tired to help. Taylor says 'I feel unappreciated when I do the chores because I would like for us to share these tasks together'. Alex says 'When I come home from work, I feel disrespected when comments are made about me being lazy or unhelpful. They agree to be nicer and create a chore list to help each other.'

10

Learning Outcome 3

LO 3: Bystander Intervention Techniques

- Express concern
- Trust your gut
- Listen
- Focus on the feelings of the survivor rather than your own
- Support their decisions
- Ask what you can do for them

Learning Outcome 3

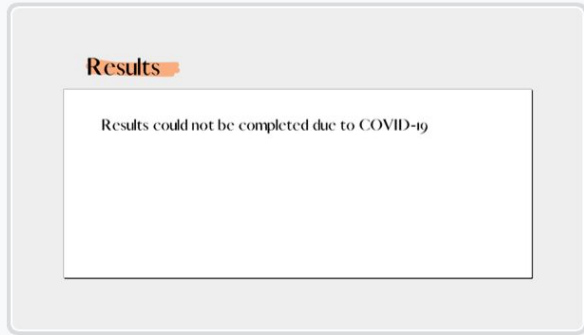
LO 3: Indicate one bystander intervention strategy

Q A friend has just expressed to you that their partner has been going through their cell phone. It resulted in an argument & their partner started to throw things at the wall, saying "You are lucky that it's the wall & not you". Your friend expresses that their partner apologized & said they won't do it again. Your friend does not know what to do & asks for your advice. What do you say?

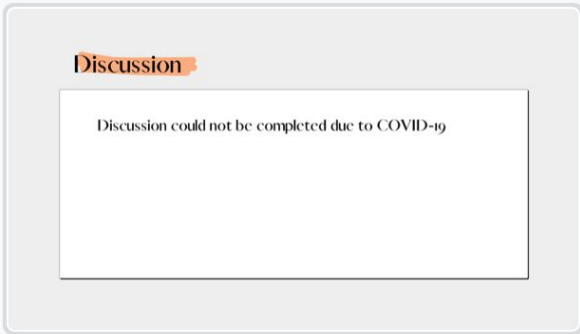
- "Thank you for trusting me, I'm always here for you"
 - "You don't deserve this. You deserve to be treated with respect"



13



14



15



16