



**Elephant in The Room Q & A
North HS
Spring 2017**

Resources:

BLOOM365 Advocate	Text or call 602-799-7017 for free, confidential support. Please allow up to 24 hours to receive an initial response.
BLOOM365 Hotline	Call 1-888-606-HOPE (4673)
BLOOM365 Weekly Drop-In Support Group	Every Monday (Holidays excluded). Please email teens@bloom365.org for more information.
Teen Lifeline	Text or call 602-248-TEEN (8336) for free, confidential support 24/7 relating to suicide, depression, bullying, or relationships
National Domestic Violence Hotline	1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
National Sexual Assault Hotline	1-800.656.HOPE (4673)

Q: Student

A: BLOOM365 Advocate

1) How do I help my friend who's in a controlling relationship?

We should first understand the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship (fear, love, dependency, and insecurity). It's also important that we don't blame the victim. In your packet, you can reference the "5 Ways to Help a Friend Going Through Dating Abuse" to a start a conversation with the survivor.

2) What do I do if a victim denies and refuses help? Similar question: If I know a friend who is in an abusive relationship and doesn't want help... What do I do?

Sometimes our friends are not ready to accept the help we would like to offer them. The most important thing we can do is let our friends know that we are there for them when they are ready, make sure they are safe, and let them know that they are not alone. You can also reference the five ways to talk to a friend who is a victim page in your Bloom packet in order to get the conversation started. Especially if you recognize the top 5 risk factors on the red flags list, it's important to tell an adult you trust because this means that your friend could be at risk of getting injured or even killed.

3) I ended my relationship with someone, and he won't leave me alone. I don't block his number, because then he goes and looks for me at my house. I just don't what to do. What do you guys recommend?

It is important that you reach out to a trusted adult or the school social worker. It is imperative in these situations that we document the incidents in a detailed way. Stalking of this kind is against the law and is potentially dangerous. There are resources available through the school to ensure that you are safe. If you do not feel comfortable going to a trusted adult, please reach out to us via phone at 1-888-606-HOPE so we can help you come up with a plan.

4) What if you are in an abusive relationship and the police get involved, but don't do anything. What if you're scared that they will kill you because they've put a gun up to you. What should that person do?

If there is a gun involved it is imperative that you reach out to a trusted adult or BLOOM365. There are ways that Bloom can advocate for you that does not involve the police. When a gun is involved the risk of being seriously hurt is high. Please reach out to a BLOOM365 Advocate by texting or calling 602-799-7017. You can also call 1-888-606-HOPE or contact your school guidance counselor.

5) What if you self-harm after a relationship (because of the relationship)?

Self harm is something that many people struggle with. It is important that you reach out for support either to Bloom, or to a trusted adult. You are not alone in this, and we are here to support you in whatever way you need.

6) My cousin broke up with her abusive boyfriend, but she keeps going back and getting hurt even more. How can I help her get away from the abuse?

We should first understand the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship (fear, love, dependency, and insecurity). It's also important that we don't blame the victim. In your packet, you can reference the "5 Ways to Help a Friend Going Through Dating Abuse" to start a conversation with the survivor.

7) What if a usually polite guy loses his patience and hits you, but promises he won't do that again? Should someone believe it? Similar question: What do you do when a person hits you?

If someone is physically assaulting you it is important to understand, first, that it is not your fault. They are exerting power and control over you using physical force. The best thing to do is reach out to a trusted adult or BLOOM65 to develop a safety plan. Physical assault is a major red flag, and Bloom can be a resource for you to talk about your options.

8) How can you get over someone that you're attached to because you were manipulated for a year? Similar question: What do you do with a break-up?

Check out the coping strategies provided during dose 6 and find one or more that best suit you. This could be spending more time with friends or dedicating time to a new hobby or skill. You can also reach out to a BLOOM365 advocate to help you come up with a daily or weekly goal to help you look toward all of the blooming things ahead for you!

9) What should you do if your boyfriend or girlfriend does drugs and you don't want that, but you don't want to be a snitch?

If someone is using drugs and it makes you uncomfortable it is important to go to a trusted adult so that person can get help. You can also anonymously report crimes to the school and to the police so that no one knows who the report came from.

10) Why do people think that boys are better in everything?

Unhealthy gender norms are very common in our society. We know that rigid belief in unhealthy gender norms contributes to power and control in our relationships. We can engage in productive conversations that break down some of these unhealthy gender stereotypes.

11) What are the stats of men and women who have reported (abuse)?

One in four women and one in seven men will report physical abuse from an intimate partner in their lifetime. That number is even higher when it comes to verbal and emotional abuse.

12) If a person refuses to send pictures of body parts and the partner gets mad, what does that mean?

No one is under any obligation to send nude photos if they do not want to. If a partner is not respecting their lack of consent, that is a red flag of power and control. Everyone has the right to say no and, in a healthy relationship, the partner should respect that.

13) Why don't people leave the relationships if their being abused?

Once again, we should first understand the barriers to leaving an abusive relationship (fear, love, dependency, and insecurity). Oftentimes it's hard to just "unhook" everything at once. The cycle of abuse has that much power. It's also important that we don't blame the victim. In your packet, you can reference the "5 Ways to Help a Friend Going Through Dating Abuse" to start a conversation with the survivor/ victim.

14) What if you can't help? What if it's too late?

It is never too late! Please reach out to BLOOM365 at 1-888-606-HOPE or text/call a BLOOM365 advocate at 602-799-7017 and we can find a way to advocate for you in any way you need. There is always hope and we can help you find a solution.

15) Why is it that that friends try to force a relationship and what could you do? Similar question: If there is a relationship people want to see you in, but you don't really like her because of your past relationship with her... What should you do if you don't even want to talk to her?

Setting boundaries, even with friends is not an easy task. However, we should always consent to the relationships that we are in and if our friends are forcing us to be with people we do not like, that sounds like power and control. First, we should talk to our friends about how that makes us feel. If that does not work, we should reach out to a trusted adult for help, like BLOOM365.

16) How can dating abuse affect the rest of your life?

Dating abuse can have many effects, but you are not alone if you are experiencing this. Reaching out to Bloom for support and advocacy is a great first step so we can start the healing process after we have experienced this.

17) How do you come back from being abused? Similar question: How do you deal with emotional abuse- the “aftermath”?

We encourage you to reach out to advocate who can help you take the steps to healing. Some resources include: The National Teen Dating Violence Hotline (24/7 support: 1-866-331-9474 or text “loveis” to 22522), email teens@bloom365.org, local support: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673).

18) What if you’re the abuser, but also the victim?

There are relationships where both partners are violent or abusive. However, it is important to recognize that sometimes victims who have been controlled or violated by a partner can become abusive to take their power back. In this situation both partners are encouraged to reach out to an advocate to address their abusive and violent behaviors outside of the relationship.

19) How can you end on good terms with an ex?

Separation can be very difficult and this is one of the most important times that communication can be a vital tool to end a relationship on good terms. By communicating our desires and reasoning for wanting to end a relationship we can give each other closure to move on and hopefully grow from our experience. Closure is an important part of healing and moving forward with our lives.

20) Do people know when they are in an abusive relationship?

Sometimes people do not recognize (or even know) the signs of dating abuse. That is why it is important that when we see a friend who is experiencing power and control in their relationship, we let them know that they do not deserve to be treated that way.

21) What if we don’t have any help, how do we solve the problem?

We want you to know that you always have our help. Please reach out to BLOOM365 if ever you or someone you know is in an abusive situation. This is why we exist and hope that you feel like there is someone always there to help. We encourage you to reach out to advocate who can help you take the steps to help. Some resources include: the National Teen Dating Violence Hotline (24/7 support: 1-866-331-9474 or text “loveis” to 22522), email teens@bloom365.org, local support: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673).

22) Why is love torture and never lasts?

As we have learned about developing healthy relationships we can start to implement the techniques of healthy communication and developing healthy self esteem which will help to create relationships built off of equality and freedom. Love should not be torture or full of instability as we have learned in the program. Love should be all the positive characteristics that we came up with and we should strive to create the relationships that we want for ourselves and also help others develop healthy relationships as well. Love can be full of equality and freedom and long lasting.

23) Where did it all start with women not being equal to men?

This idea goes back many years and historically it has been passed from generation to generation. This is why awareness is an important part of fixing any issue we see around us. Once we know what the issue is we can work together for justice and equality. This idea is still very strong and prevalent in various cultures around the globe and we need to continue being better informed and stand for justice whenever we can.

24) Would it help a friend to leave if you helped them plan their escape or took an active part in it?

If we have friends who are in unhealthy/abusive relationships and they fear for their own safety we need to contact our school counselor, a BLOOM365 advocate (602-799-7017) and the trusted adults so that we can make sure everyone is safe. This is why safety planning is important in situation where our lives are at risk. We encourage you to reach out to advocate who can help you take the steps to help. Some resources include: the National Teen Dating Violence Hotline (24/7 support: 1-866-331-9474 or text "loveis" to 22522), email teens@bloom365.org, local support: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673).

25) Is it okay if he gets jealous every once in awhile even though he respects you and is honest and kind? Similar question: Is being jealous always bad? Similar question: Is being jealous a bad sign?

Jealousy is a natural, human emotion. Most humans have felt or experienced jealousy. When jealousy becomes unhealthy or abusive is when it is possessive, obsessive or controlling. If you do see signs of jealousy, you can communicate your feelings and concerns with your partner by using "I" statements. "I feel _____ when you get jealous, could you please _____." If communicating your feelings does not change your partner's behavior, and you are experiencing persistent jealousy, it is a warning sign of power and control and could lead to an abusive relationship.

26) When teens or anybody is in an abusive relationship and they get sexually abused, why do they tend to blame themselves or blame others?

From media to everyday conversations, we still live in a world where victims of sexual assault are blamed. "She should not have drank that much." "She should not wear leggings or tight clothes." "When she dresses like a slut, what does she expect?" These and other "normalizing" comments create a culture where victims (primarily female victims) are blamed for being sexually assaulted. Abusers and sexual violence predators often use these social norms and "gaslighting" to push the victim into believing they are the one at fault. They use their dominance, put-downs, verbal abuse, and intimidation to build psychological confusion within the victim. The victim then starts believing if they had only "listened" or "did something different" that they could have prevented the sexual violence.

27) What do you think love is?

Love is more than an emotion or a feeling of butterflies and warm fuzzies. Love is also an action. Defining what love means to you is important first step before entering into a dating or committed relationship. To you, love may mean that the other person shows affection often. To someone else, it may mean their partner is always encouraging them to do the things that make them happy. Go back to the "deal makers" discussed on day 6/dose 6. Do they represent love to you?

28) If someone is drunk and they force you, is that consent? Similar question: What if both partners are drunk and high and she gave him consent, but the next day she denies this and presents charges against him?

For someone to give consent they cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Whenever someone is being forced into doing an act that is definitely not consent. Even if both partners are drunk and high it does not mean that consent is given. This is a risky behavior that puts both people a jeopardy for a legal lawsuit because consent cannot be given while someone is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

29) Why did the boys not get asked the same questions in the step-up activity?

We tried to ask questions that were hopefully more relevant to both groups. This is a good point to mention though that both masculine and feminine groups sometimes are impacted by the same societal pressures. We will consider this point going forward. Thank you for your question.

30) What if you know you're in an unhealthy relationship and tried leaving, but keep finding your way back to him?

Leaving is not always easy. The best thing we can do if we know the relationship is abusive is reach out to those around us for support. BLOOM365 is a great resource for you to connect with people experiencing similar things who also understand how hard it is to leave.

31) What if you joke around a lot with your partner and others think it's bad... Is it?

There are different type of jokes. If our jokes are hurting others feelings and causing them to feel insecure we should take the time to understand the impact of our words. As we learned during our communication activity with our words we can cause someone to wilt or help them bloom. Positive and healthy jokes are definitely a part of relationships, but we should be careful that our words don't become hurtful.

32) I've been in a relationship for over a year, but he's changing and he is getting a little aggressive. I've talked to him about it, but I'm not sure what to do.

Great first step in communicating your needs! If your partner is unable to listen to those needs, however, it might be important to decide if there is power and control involved. Use the Red Flag Checklist to determine if there is potential Red Flags. If these exist, the next step would be to reach out to a trust adult or BLOOM365.

33) What's your opinion on being in a serious relationship when you're young?

We know that most teens are dating and we just want every teen to have healthy and safe relationships that they are consenting to be in. If the teen is engaging in relationships that stem from equality and freedom, that's what's most important.

34) If they hurt you once, can you go back?

We know that sometimes going back to people who have hurt us seems like the best option, however, we must first establish if this person is meeting our deal breakers/ deal makers. Also, determining if we see any red flags in the relationship. That's the best place to begin when determining if we should re enter relationships.

35) How do I control my anger?

There are resources available through Bloom and through the school social worker, which can help you with managing your anger. Please reach out to us, if this is something you'd like to work on with the Bloom team. Some resources include: email teens@bloom365.org, local support: 1-888-606-HOPE (4673).

36) What if you ask your boyfriend to show you affection and to show you he cares, but he just says "I told you from the beginning, I'm cold hearted"?

Communication in this case is key. If you communicate with your boyfriend that you are feeling like he is not showing you enough affection, and he is unwilling to meet that need, that may be a deal breaker for you. Mutual affection in which both partners are contributing equally to the relationship is a sign of a healthy, Blooming relationship.

37) How do we know if we handled the problem correctly with a friend? What if we over think the problem and just leave?

Providing continual support with a friend is a good idea. Checking in and making sure they know you are there for them even after the initial conversation is a great option. Sometimes it takes more than one conversation to really get through to a friend who is experiencing abuse.

38) Are you able to help with something else other than an abusive relationship?

We focus in teen dating violence, but we can advocate for anyone who has experienced trauma. This includes teen dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, bully, gender based violence or anything of that nature.

39) What are the statistics on how many women break the norm?

There are currently no statistics that measure this. When we look through our history, we can find several examples of those who broke the norm to create social change.