Supporting Indigenous Teens Through Digital Dating Violence



Some Indigenous teens live in isolated communities and may not have access to the resources that teens living in urban centres may have. This info sheet provides tips to support Indigenous teens experiencing digital dating violence. This info sheet can be used to supplement the specific info sheets in the Teens & Tech Abuse: Staying Safe in Relationships and Supporting Teens Experiencing Digital Dating Violence toolkits.

Before getting started, establish trust by respecting and maintaining confidentiality. Approach safety planning with patience, cultural sensitivity, empathy, and understanding. Many Indigenous youth rely on community to

navigate generational traumas that have historically led to Indigenous people being overrepresented as victims of violent crime and intimate partner violence. Access to technology and social media platforms can be essential for many Indigenous youth to stay connected with friends, family, and community.

1. Start your conversation by asking what tech they use.

Tech can be any device, app or software they use, including:

- Phones
- Computers
- Tablets Email
- Social Media
- Online Games
- Smart Devices like smartwatches

2. Explain warning signs of unhealthy relationships.

Explain that sometimes unhealthy relationships look like:

- Losing touch with friends or family or giving up hobbies, which may be isolating.
- Mood swings, anxiety, fear, depression, secretive behaviour, or unexplained injuries.
- Feeling anxious if they miss messages or calls from their partner who may be monitoring them.
- Extreme jealousy or controlling decisions by a partner who may be monitoring them.

- Extreme jealousy or controlling decisions by a partner who is checking in constantly.
- Making excuses for a partner's behaviour such as laughing off violence, apologizing for the partner, or normalizing abuse.

3. Define Abuse

Abuse is a pattern of behaviours one person can use to gain and maintain power and control over their dating partner. Abuse can be verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, financial, spiritual, and tech-facilitated. It can look like name-calling or insults, extreme jealousy, grabbing, hitting or pulling hair, pressure or forced sexual activity, or even controlling how money is spent. Many people assume abuse means that physical violence is happening, but that's not always the case.

You can use the following resource to help you describe abuse:

- Teen Dating Violence Spectrum

4. Explain how tech can be misused for abuse.

Explain that even though we use technology every day to connect with friends, family, and community, people can use it to harass, threaten, and mistreat others.

Tech abuse can look like telling you who you can follow or talk to online, sending threatening texts and DMs, or sharing private images without consent.

You can use the following resource to help

- Is Tech Abuse Happening to You? (Poster)

Embed links in important resources you create to support youth such as:

- Teen Digital Dating Violence Toolkit
- Kids Help Phone

5. Explain to teens what a safety plan is and how to create one.

You can support teens to create one using the Tech Safety Planning Checklist or the Kids Help Phone Safety Plan Info Sheet.

- Include graphics in any resource you create.
- Use QR codes in your resources so that youth can access your supports quickly.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing technology-facilitated violence, you are not alone. Encourage them to chat with a trusted adult, connect with the Kids Help Phone to create a safety plan, or use ShelterSafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house near you to discuss options and create a safety plan. You don't need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.

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