



Victim Services

Helping Victims Become Survivors

Spring, 2005 Vol. 10

The First Step to a Healthy Relationship...is a Healthy YOU



To have a healthy, respectful relationship, there has to be two healthy, respectful people. So if your goal is to improve your relationship, or find a good one, the first step is to work on yourself.

Once I was listening to a lecturer speak about relationships and families. He joked that 95% of families are dysfunctional and the other 5% are lying! Cynical, yes, but it was also rather comforting to me to hear this and laugh about how much we all strive to get it right in relationships. The joke was an affirmation that nobody's perfect and no one's relationship or family is perfect either. We all struggle.

While all relationships are tested from time to time with miscommunication and misunderstandings, other relationships fall into abusive patterns. The theme this year for Sexual Assault Awareness Month asks us to examine our relationships and commit ourselves to building healthy and respectful ones. How can we do this?

In counseling I often talk to people about boundaries. Many have never really thought about what it means unless we are talking about a basketball court or a property line. Personal boundaries can be thought of as the line between your "self" and others. Boundaries determine what we will allow in our lives and what we will not allow; they let the good stuff in and keep the bad stuff out. The way to state your boundaries with others is to learn the word "no," refusing to let others manipulate, control, overpower or harm you in any way.

Unfortunately, perpetrators of abuse have no respect for the personal boundaries of their victims. Sexual assault and sexual abuse are extreme examples of violating someone's personal space. If abuse happens early in a

child's life, the child tends to have difficulties establishing boundaries later in life because they have not had the opportunity to learn to effectively say "no" to abuse. Children grow up believing that they will be harmed no matter what and they have no power to stop it. This is especially true if the abuser was a trusted family member or friend. When someone is raped, they often feel that power and control have been stolen from them and they will never recover personal power, self-confidence, or trust.

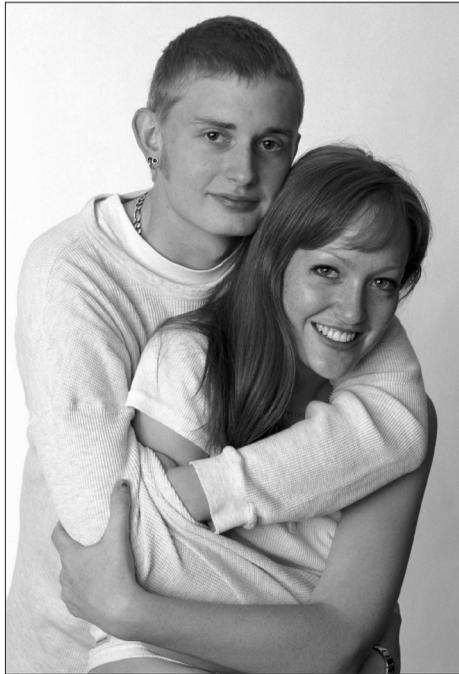
With some time, hard work, and commitment, victims of sexual assault or sexual abuse can learn to have healthy relationships. They can learn how to set boundaries and keep themselves physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually safe. They can learn to recognize red flags and warning signals that might identify an abusive personality in someone else. They can learn to see themselves as deserving of love and respect. The key is to first focus on healing and developing respect for self. If a person is healthy, centered, conscious, positive, and happy, they will attract a person with the same qualities. The same goes for someone who is insecure, frightened, negative, and angry; like attracts like.

To have a healthy, respectful relationship, there has to be two healthy, respectful people. So if your goal is to improve your relationship, or find a good one, the first step is work on yourself. Examine your family origin. Understand your own emotional baggage. Heal your old wounds. Learn good communication skills. Develop effective boundaries. Let go of anger and resentment. Forgive yourself and others. Don't expect someone to "make" you happy. Find peace and happiness for yourself first!

**-Gayla Elliott
VS Counselor**

Victim Services Awarded Grant From ICASA and IVPA

Teaching teenagers to identify characteristics of healthy relationships...and more



Victim Services Prevention Educators have been awarded a grant from the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) and the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA) that allows them to participate in a statewide evaluation program.

Per the grant, the educators will be working with high school teenagers regarding dating violence and healthy relationships. Educators will use a

curriculum developed by the *Sexual Assault Counseling and Information Services* in Charleston, Illinois. The prevention evaluation grant has three primary goals:

1. Develop a common set of outcome measures that could be used to assess the effectiveness of ICASA's independent rape prevention programs.
2. Identify the best programs in the state for improving attitudes, knowledge, and behavioral intentions of male and female students, urban, suburban and rural students, and Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic students.
3. Identify the content and characteristics of prevention programs that are most associated with success.

The educators will administer a pretest then present the five-session program "Dating Violence and Healthy Relationships." A post-test will be conducted at the end of the program. Students will be tested on their ability to identify myths regarding sexual assault (child sexual assault, media, gender), identify characteristics of healthy relationships and define acquaintance rape. Their post-test scores will provide data to ICASA reflecting the effectiveness of the curriculum and aid in the development of statewide standards for ICASA's prevention programs.

Civil No Contact Orders Update

A Civil No Contact Order (CNCO) is a civil "stay away" order that allows for a victim of non-consensual sexual conduct or sexual penetration to file a petition for a CNCO when there is no relationship to the perpetrator. The idea for this type of option for clients has been developing over a number of years and was finally passed into law and became effective on January 1, 2004. However, due to a glitch in the writing of the bill it did not allow for emergency CNCOs, only plenary orders. As of January 1, 2005, this mistake was corrected and individuals can now get emergency orders.

Emergency CNCOs are good for 14-21 days and plenary orders are good for up to two years. There is no fee for filing the petition or for service upon the respondent. People can receive confidential assistance through Victim Services if they feel that they have been victimized. Since the first of this year, Victim Services has assisted two people in getting CNCOs. The public is not completely aware that this is now an option because they are so new. If you are interested in learning about a CNCO, you can access more information on the ICASA website at www.icasa.org.

New Staff Members for VS

Beginning March 16, 2005 Victim Services welcomed staff to three positions. Kim Warrington, Victim Services Prevention Educator, moved to the position of Domestic Violence Legal Advocate. She replaced Sarah Skiles who has chosen to remain home with her new daughter. Rebecca Cox, former Victim Services intern, is now the Domestic Violence Children's Advocate. Becky is a graduate of Western Illinois University (WIU) with a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and is finishing up her Master's, also in Sociology. She is replacing Kerrie Bishop. Kerrie is now working as a police officer with WIU's Office of Public Safety. Josh Mercer is the new Prevention Educator. Josh is originally from Vermont, IL, and has completed his Bachelor's and Master's level degrees in Sociology from Western Illinois University.

VS Staff Attend Statewide SA Conference

VS Director Diane Mayfield, Counselor Gayla Elliott, Domestic Violence Legal Advocate Kim Warrington, and Intern Nicole Friscia attended the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) sponsored sexual assault conference in March. The conference provided continuing education and training for sexual assault staff within ICASA's local sexual assault crisis centers across Illinois, along with allied professionals working to serve victims of sexual assault within our respective communities.

Blue Ribbons for Child Abuse Prevention



Victim Services is again providing blue awareness ribbons for Child Abuse Prevention Month. Pick them up along with materials providing ideas for parent and child activities at your local libraries, county health departments, Department of Human Services offices, and the WIRC-CAA office.

Victim Services
24-Hour Crisis Line
309-837-5555

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR KIDS

From financial assistance, to safe places for children to play, to better housing, there are many ways that communities can support families.

Parents are children's first teachers, but not their only teachers. Childcare providers, teachers, doctors, neighbors, coaches, and grandparents all influence children as well. The quality and stability of young children's relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development. Children learn a lot in their early years--they learn respect, right from wrong, and how to get along with each other. All other people they come in contact with can help reinforce this learning and influence their long-term development.

Surround a child with secure relationships and stimulating experiences, and s/he will incorporate that environment to become a confident, caring adult, ready to be part of society. But if s/he is surrounded by violence or given little intellectual or emotional stimulation, it will be much more difficult to grow up successfully. As members of the community, we should ask ourselves - are we providing the kind of environments that will allow children to grow into citizens who give back to communities?

Imagine coming home from the hospital with your new baby and having no family members nearby and no close ties to your neighbors. Imagine that these stresses are compounded by financial worries or a job in jeopardy. The loneliness and stress would put strain on the most loving parent and could cause parents to neglect a child due to their own despair. Social isolation is common for new parents, often struggling to figure out how to juggle jobs and parenting. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Some communities are working to prevent problems before they start by developing neighborhood ties that can bring people together. Some are creating playgroups for new families held at community centers, local libraries, or schools. At these groups, parents meet others who are having the same experiences, and they build relationships that can lead to long-term friendships and support. Other communities are working with health professionals to provide at-home visits to new parents to help them adjust to the new demands of parenthood and provide a link to the community. From financial assistance, to safe places for children to play, to better housing, there are many ways that communities can support families.

Children do well when their parents do well. And families do better when they live in supportive communities. We can all play a positive part.

*Adapted with permission from Prevent Child Abuse America.



Safe Children and Healthy Families Are a Shared Responsibility

Become one of the STARS in your community.

Support children and parents in your community.

Be a good neighbor. Donate your children's clothing, toys, and furniture for another family to use.

Take a positive perspective.

Focus and build on what parents and families are doing right.

Address the issue.

Talk to elected officials, schools, community groups, and neighbors about what can be done to support safe children and healthy families.

Recognize that parenting can be challenging.

Offer assistance to parents before parenting becomes too much.

Strengthen coping skills.

Promote supportive friendships for parents and positive self-images for children

Get involved! For resources and information, visit the Prevention section of the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect information website:

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/topics/prevention>

20 Ways to Say I LOVE YOU

Say, "I trust you."

Speak kindly to your child.

Listen. Listen. Listen.

Be ready to be there.

Allow mistakes.

Ask, "How can I help you?"

Say, "I'm proud of you."

Set boundaries.

Smile.

Be home when they are home.

Acknowledge feelings.

Celebrate success.

Explain why you are angry.

Use a soft voice.

Hug often.

Wish your child a "great day" when off to school.

Keep your promises.

Accept no excuses, bargaining, or whining.

Make free time.

Say, "I love you."

Decide to End Sexual Violence: Build Healthy, Respectful Relationships

For several years, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) has promoted the theme, "Decide to End Sexual Violence" as part of its annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign. This year, the NSVRC has incorporated a new emphasis: building healthy, respectful relationships. VS Counselor Gayla Elliott explores that concept in the cover article of this newsletter. By incorporating these two themes, the NSVRC offers a positive action-oriented emphasis as well as concrete recognition of the value of respectful relationships in preventing sexual violence.

In all relationships, you have the right to set limits, feel safe and get support. You also have responsibility to trust your instincts and model respectful behaviors.

Healthy relationships are non-threatening, supportive and involve shared responsibility. That means touching, kissing, hugging and sexual activity require permission; every person has the right to say no and to change his or her mind; and permission is not gained through coaxing, pressuring, force or harassment.

Healthy relationships are about:

- ✓ Respect for each other
- ✓ Equality in importance
- ✓ Listening and communicating

- ✓ Awareness of rights, differences and desires
- ✓ Trusting yourself and one another
- ✓ Empathy

Material provided by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, a project of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. For more information, call NSVRC toll free: 877-739-3895, or visit its website: www.nsvrc.org

The VS Newsletter is edited by Patti Sullivan-Howd.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month



The Victim Services Program serves Hancock, Henderson, McDonough and Warren counties.
P. O. Box 157 - Macomb, Illinois 61455 - DV (309) 837-6622 - SA (309) 836-2148
24-Hour Crisis Line (309) 837-5555 fax: (309) 836-3640 email: victimservices@wirpc.org