



## Abusive LGBTQAI+ Relationships

Everybody deserves a safe and healthy relationship. You may think LGBTQAI+ couples cannot be in abusive relationships, but that's not true. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning, and gender non-conforming youth experience dating abuse at the same rates and in similar ways as heterosexual couples do. In fact, one in three young people - straight, gay and everyone in between - experience some form of dating abuse.

### Obstacles for LGBTQ Youth to Get Help

Many LGBTQAI+ teens believe that no one will help them because they are transgender or in a same-sex relationship. If you're LGBTQAI+, you may face additional obstacles when asking for help:

- **Shame or embarrassment.** You may be struggling with your own internalized homophobia or shame about your sexual orientation or gender-identity. Your abusive partner may attempt to use this shame to exert power and control over you. They may try to make you feel guilty about yourself by calling you names that play on sexuality or gender insecurities (like saying you're "not man enough") or pressuring you into sexual acts that you're not comfortable with by saying that's what's "normal" in your kind of relationship.
- **Fear of not being believed or taken seriously.** You may worry that if you report abuse, you will encounter common stereotypes like violence between LGBTQAI+ partners is always mutual, abuse doesn't occur in lesbian relationships, only the physically bigger partner can be abusive or LGBTQAI+ relationships are inherently unhealthy. Your partner may exploit this fear, trying to convince you that no one will take an LGBTQAI+ victim seriously. This can happen, but not always. At loveisrespect, we will always take you seriously and can connect you to others who'll do the same.
- **Fear of retaliation, harassment, rejection or bullying.** If you are not yet out to everyone, your abusive dating partner may threaten to tell your secret to people who will make your life more difficult once they know. You may also fear that seeking help will make you a target of public ridicule, retaliation, harassment or bullying. Your abusive partner may exploit these fears to isolate you and keep you in the relationship.
- **Good intentions.** As part of the LGBTQAI+ community, you may fear that disclosing the abuse will make everyone look bad. Your partner may even use this against you, making you feel guilty for getting help. For example, if your partner's not out, they may tell you that you can't report the abuse without breaking the trust of everyone in your group. If this is happening to you, chat with a peer advocate or contact one of our LGBTQAI+ referrals. We'll listen, help you understand what's happening and brainstorm ways to cope.
- **Less legal protection.** You may be unaware that you have legal options for protection — including obtaining a restraining or protective order. Although laws vary from state to state, and some specifically restrict restraining orders to heterosexual couples, most states have gender-neutral laws that do not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Learn about your state's laws.
- **Loss of community.** If you're part of a religious community or traditional family, you may worry that disclosing your relationship — let alone the abuse you're experiencing — may make the situation worse. Also, in your small LGBTQAI+ community, it may feel like there's nowhere to turn.

If you are concerned for your self or a friend, call DoVE.

**DoVE offers FREE & CONFIDENTIAL help, advice, and resources.**

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