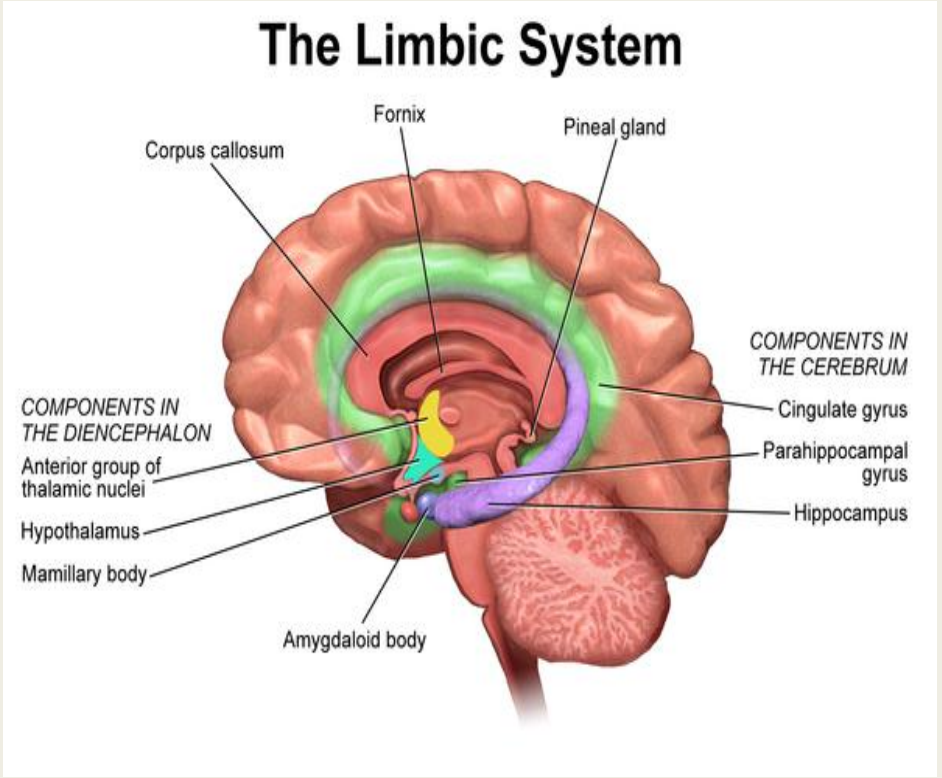
RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENCE AND EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Ashley Moore, LCPC

A Foreword:
Reminders About The Adolescent/YA Brain

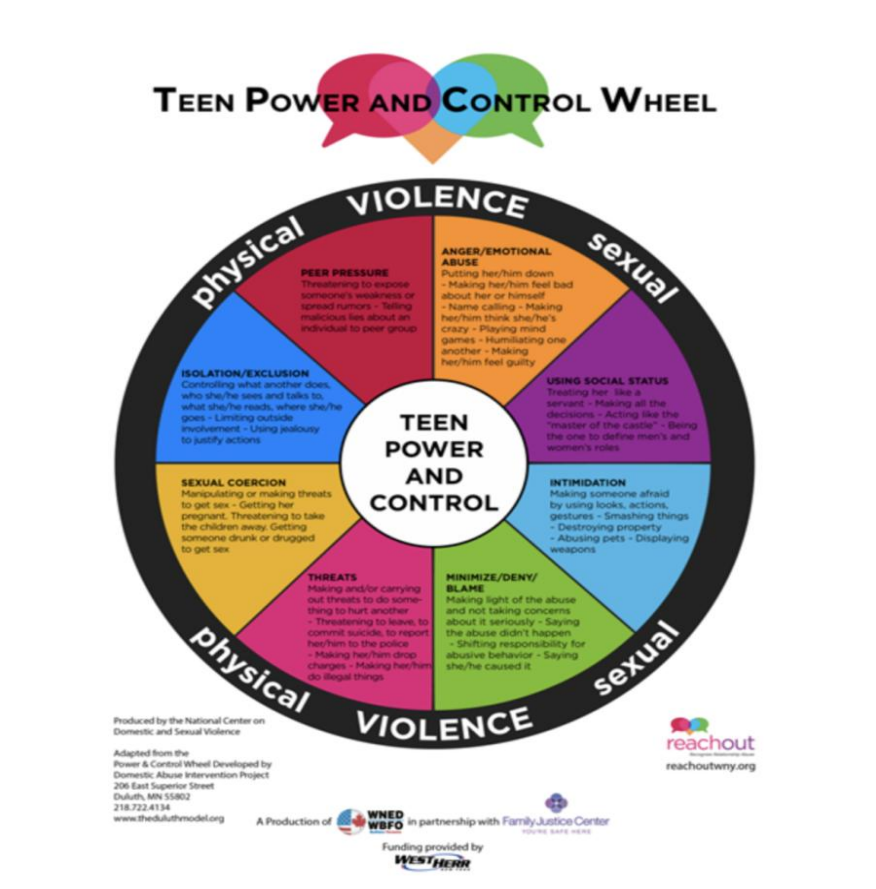
- Limbic system is developing at a much faster rate than the PFC
- Increases risk and reward seeking
- Increases reactivity and response to social rejection
- Low capacity for judgement, inhibition, etc.



Relationships in Adolescence/YA

- Time of life in which young people are learning how to form safe, healthy relationships.
- Trying on many different roles, “hats”, identities.
- Peers play a particularly large role in identity development, as do healthy dating patterns.
- Interestingly, data suggests that both dating and sexual activity in adolescence has decreased in recent years.
  - *2/3rds of 13-17 y.o. never been in a romantic relationship*
  - *Decrease in sexual activity, from 54% of high schoolers in 1990 to 38% in 2019 (Office of Population Affairs, 2024)*

Violence in Adolescent/YA Relationships: Types of Violence



(National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, 2024)

- **Relational Violence**
  - *Peer pressure*
  - *Starting rumors*
  - *Isolation/ostracizing*
  - *Name calling*
- **Physical**
- **Sexual**
  - *Sexual coercion*
  - *Sexual assault*

Violence in Adolescent/YA Relationships: Trends

- Higher rates of teen dating violence in the US than were originally predicted.

- High overlap between victimization and perpetration.
  - *Approx. 84% of victims also endorsed perpetrating.* *(Taylor, Mumford, & Liu, 2013-2020)*

- No differences in victimization rates of dating violence between males and females.
  - *Females report perpetrating physical abuse and psychological abuse more frequently than males.*

Risk Factors for Violence in Adolescent/YA Relationships (Taylor, Mumford, and Liu, 2013-2020)

- Individual characteristics
  - *Namely negative mental health, particularly for females*
- Negative relationships with parents
- Previous exposure to <u>any</u> violence
- Unhealthy relationship dynamics
- Conflict over finances
- Being a member of the LGBTQ+ community

Negative Impacts of Relationship Violence (Youth.Gov, 2024)

- Increased mental health concerns
  - *Symptoms of anxiety, depression, poor body image*
- Poor school performance and/or truancy
- Increased risk of pregnancy and STIs
- Establish unhealthy relational dynamics that follow into adulthood
  - *Codependence, repeated abuse (both perpetration and victimization)*
- Increased substance use (more on next slide)

Substance Use and Relational Violence

- The relationship between substance use and relational violence in adolescence is bidirectional and complex.
  - *It both increases the likelihood of victimization and perpetration*
- Other factors moderate the role substance use plays in perpetration (Reyes, Foshee, Ennett & Bauer, 2015)
  - *Social/family control, existence or absence of pro-social peer networks*
- Alcohol and hard drug use (Cocaine, LSD, Ecstasy, Prescription) appear to be most predictive.

How to Help:
Prevention As Healthcare Providers

Reduce Risk:

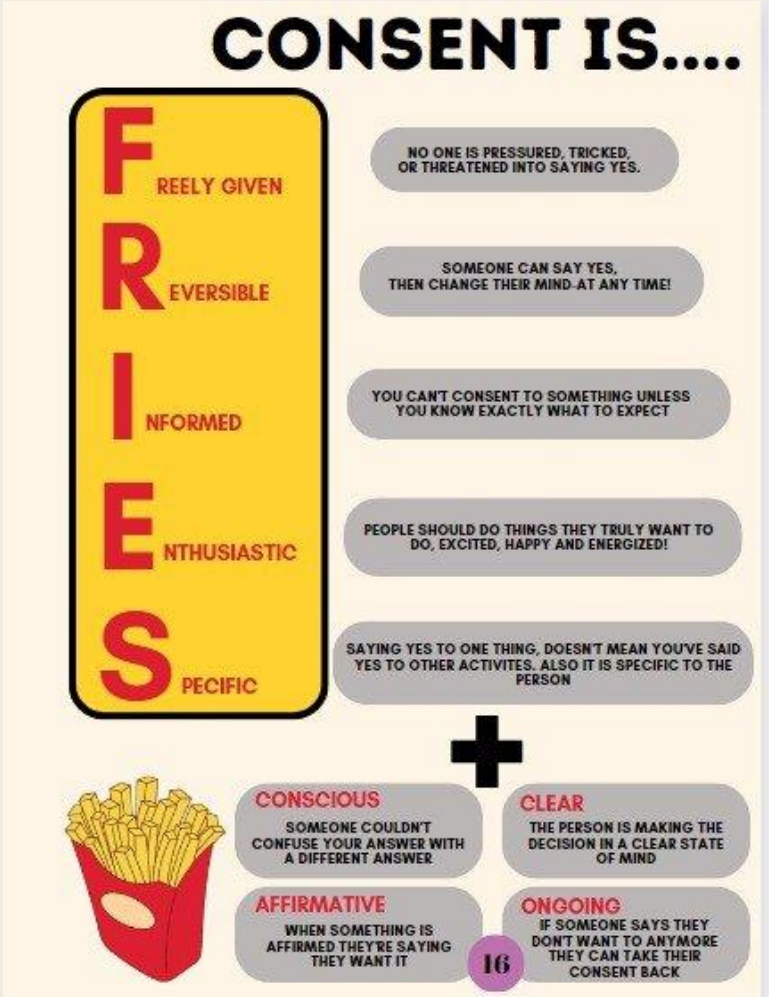
- Contraception and it's role in decreasing risk of pregnancy
- Share resources that are both safe and informative
  - *EG: Loveisrespect.org*
- Talking openly and directly about consent.
- Discussing and assessing substance use patterns.

Increase Protective Factors:

- Building skills for managing conflict and regulating emotions
- Encourage behavioral health intervention for individuals with a trauma history or other mental health concerns.
- Parents are still THE MOST important relationship in adolescent's lives, Encouraging and empowering parents to remain involved and engaged is prevention.

Consent and How to Talk About It

- Ask direct questions, give direct information.
- Talk with them, not at them
  - *Open ended questions, reflective listening*
- Be sex positive
  - *Interest in sex is normal and healthy. Being informed is key.*
- Take development into account
  - *Starting young is helpful but looks a little different*
  - *EG: body safety, autonomy, and appropriate anatomical terms*
- Emphasize <u>enthusiastic</u> consent
  - *"Yeah, sure" is not consent. We're looking for a "Heck yeah" or nothing.*



(Kerr, 2024)

Case Study: Grace

- Presenting patient is a 19 year old, Caucasian female in a relationship with a 21 year old Caucasian male. Patient is from a rural area of the state of Maine and lives at, or just above, the poverty line. Patient has minimal support from parents, apart being allowed to live with them. She describes a caring relationship with her parents, but one without much guidance or access to resources. Patient works approx. 20 hours per week at a coffee shop. Patient has been in a relationship with her current partner for 2 years at the start of services. Initially, she only discusses the positive aspects of her relationship, but as the provider-patient relationship deepens, she begins to discuss more concerning patterns. Patient reports her partner has been drinking multiple beers every night. She feels this is connected to his own trauma history, which recently came to the forefront when he found himself homeless. He is now living with her at her parents. When he is drinking, she tries to stay away from him because of his "attitude." Patient reports she does not drink, but does engage in marijuana use due to chronic pain and somatic symptoms related to mental health concerns, including a trauma history of her own (sexual assault). Patient states that when they are using substances, arguments often break out, typically about finances. In her most recent office visit patient presents with bruising on her shoulder and arms. She reports that her partner had shoved her into a wall with force following an argument. She states she wasn't "too concerned because he did not mean to hurt her" but she was "feeling [angry] at him." Patient reports she doesn't think it would happen again.

- *Risk Factors*
- *Protective Factors*
- *What Would You Do?*

References

- Kerr, J. (2024, March 7). *How to talk to kids about consent*. Bridgercare. https://www.bridgercare.org/blog/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-consent
- LoveIsRespect.org(2023, February 23). *Get help.* LoveIsRespect.org https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-relationship-help-24-7-365/
- National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence. (n.d.) *"Wheels" Adapted from Power and Control Wheel Model*. National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence. https://www.ncdsv.org/wheels-adapted-from-power-and-control-wheel-model.html
- National Institute of Justice. (2023, May 1). *Five things about teen dating violence*. National Institute of Justice: Advancing Justice Through Science. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-teen-dating-violence
- Office of Population Affairs (2023, February). *Adults can help prevent teen dating violence and other sexual violence.* OASH: Office of Population Affairs. https://opa.hhs.gov/about/news/e-updates/help-prevent-teen-dating-violence
- Reyes, H. L., Foshee, V. A., Tharp, A. T., Ennett, S. T., & Bauer, D. J. (2015). Substance Use and Physical Dating Violence: The Role of Contextual Moderators. *American journal of preventive medicine*, *49*(3), 467–475. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.05.018
- Taylor, B., Mumford, E., Liu, E. (2013-2020) *The National Survey of Teen Relationships and Intimate Violence (STRiV).* Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36499.v4
- Youth.gov. (n.d.). *Youth at risk of teen dating violence*. Youth.gov. https://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence/risk