What is Digital Dating Abuse?

Do you know the signs of abuse? You might think of someone who hits, pushes, or otherwise physically hurts you, and those are definitely huge red flags. Or you might also know about the kind of abuse where your partner calls you names, threatens or humiliates you, or stalks you. And most people know that, unfortunately, some partners can be sexually violent.

But what about when a boyfriend, girlfriend, fiance, or spouse tries to control or harass someone using technology, such as social media, their cell phone, or Internet accounts? You might not think of this as abusive, but it is. Many people don’t know about this kind of abuse, which is known as digital abuse or digital dating violence.

Examples of digital abuse can include:

- Constant texting, calling, and checking on your location or who you’re with
- Trying to track you through location monitoring apps
- Demanding to know passwords (or stealing passwords)
- Going through your phone without your permission (to check on calls, read texts, look at photos, etc.)
- Reading private social media and email accounts without your knowledge and/or consent
- Posing as you online
- Spreading rumors, threatening you, or saying unkind things about you online
- Wanting control over who you “friend” or talk to online
- Making repeated demands for sexting or nude or revealing photos or videos, and/or threatening to share them

Of these behaviors, intrusive monitoring is probably the most common, with up to 20% of young people in relationships saying they’d experienced it in one 2013 poll. Pressure to sext also appears to be common among young people.
and teens.

Actions like these are inappropriately controlling and cause for concern. Remember, you always have a right to privacy and to be undisturbed. Being in a relationship never obligates you to share passwords or be available by phone or online 24/7. Your online identity is your own, and should always be under your control. Also, no one should ask you to send photos, images or videos you don’t want to send. (If you are under 18, remember that sexting can also result in serious legal consequences for both of you.)

Sometimes, it could seem romantic when a boyfriend or girlfriend is so interested in us that he or she always wants to know about our activities. However, this can quickly become intrusive and harassing. If your boyfriend or girlfriend’s behavior in this area bothers you or raises red flags, ask them to stop. If it continues, consider leaving the relationship, or reach out for help.

These resources can help if you have questions or concerns about digital abuse (or other types of abuse). Digital abuse is real and harmful.

- **Loveisrespect** (http://www.loveisrespect.org/): Many resources on healthy relationships and how to recognize abuse. Offers live online chat.
- Loveisrespect chat service: Text loveis to 22522 for questions and concerns about abuse and healthy relationships.
- Loveisrespect phone line: Call 1-866-331-9474 to speak to a peer advocate about abuse and healthy relationship
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline** (http://www.thehotline.org/) Call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) 24/7 to talk to an advocate, or visit the website for live chat with an advocate
- **Digital Dating Abuse** (http://www.loveisrespect.org/is-this-abuse/types-of-abuse/#tab-id-5) from Loveisrespect
- **Know the Signs: Spotlight on Nonstop and Excessive Texting** (http://www.breakthecycle.org/blog/know-signs-spotlight-nonstop-and-excessive-texting) from Break the Cycle
- **Break the Cycle** (http://www.breakthecycle.org/)
References:
