



## **Wednesday Workshop: Supporting Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence**

### **Podcast Transcript**

**Season 3 Episode 2: February 17, 2021**

### **Starting the CONVO on Healthy Teen Relationships**

Presented by Marissa, Adult Domestic Violence Advocate, and  
Nouchee, Dual Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Advocate

MARISSA: Hello, and welcome to The Women’s Center’s Wednesday Workshop, a podcast that shares helpful insight for survivors, community members, and service providers alike. The Women’s Center is based out of Waukesha, WI; we welcome and serve survivors of all ages, races, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and immigration statuses. The mission of The Women’s Center is to provide safety, shelter, and support to empower all impacted by domestic abuse, sexual violence, child abuse and trafficking. Each episode will feature instruction on a healing topic. Today, our topic is Starting the CONVO on Healthy Teen Relationships. We’re your hosts. My name is Marissa and I’m the Adult Domestic Violence Advocate with The Women’s Center.

NOUCHEE: And my name is Nouchee and I’m the Dual Domestic Abuse/Sexual Violence Advocate. The Women’s Center feels it is important, this month and every single day, to honor the work of Black advocates and change-makers that have created and strengthened the anti-violence movement. To Black advocates, clients, and supporters: we see you, we value you, and we respect you.

As stated by End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, our state coalition, “we will continue to ensure [Black] voices are lifted up, as we challenge our own history and [biases], and collaborate to co-create a world free of violence that centers those most impacted by it.” We want to continue this conversation. Follow along on our social media this month as we highlight those important Black advocates and changemakers that have shaped the world through their leadership.

MARISSA: So today in starting this “convo”, we want to talk about why this is important, and we want to talk about why we keep saying CONVO. That’s actually an acronym—it stands for Creating Opportunities for Non-Violent Outcomes. This is The

Women's Center's new interactive space for students (teens or young adults) on Instagram, led by our Violence Prevention Advocate, Susannah. The Instagram handle is at @convo\_twc. New themes are put out each month, posting two to three times per week with activities also on Instagram stories. It is an excellent resource and we're really hoping to grow that this year, so keep on the lookout for that. Additionally, Susannah will be hosting a Sunrise Speaker's Series on Teen Dating Violence on February 25th at 7:45am, done virtually. We will include the registration link on the website!

This is also important because February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. To define dating violence, that's a pattern of abusive behavior used to gain and or maintain power and control over a dating partner, and this month we specifically focus on teens and young adults. We'll go over some common tactics in a little while, but the ways that abuse happens are not always obvious, and warning signs can sometimes be difficult to spot. With that in mind, it is so so important to raise awareness about this issue and open up the conversation to help everyone better understand the signs of dating violence and how to prevent it from happening in the first place.

NOUCHEE: So we're going to talk about some wheels that we will have linked to this podcast. Power and Control Wheels are used to show the different tactics an abuser may use to exert power and control over victim/survivors, and teen relationships. Some of these tactics can look like isolation or exclusion- which is controlling what someone does or who they talk to. Peer pressure- so saying that other people are doing X, Y, and Z so you should be too. Another tactic is anger or emotional abuse. So this can look like making fun of your clothes, weight, grades, etc. Yelling at you constantly and making you feel unlovable. Another tactic is using social status. So saying things like no one will believe you because they have more friends or influence over you. Minimizing/Denying/Blaming is another tactic. This is gaslighting you or making you question your own reality and not taking your concerns seriously. Another tactic is intimidation or threats- threatening to hurt you, threatening to lie to a teacher or parent to get you in trouble, saying they will kill themselves if you leave, spreading rumors about you to your friends. And the lastly, sexual coercion. This includes rape, guiltting you into sex, using drugs or alcohol to get sex, getting you pregnant, or giving you an STI without your knowledge. And again, we'll have this wheel linked to the podcast if you'd like to take a closer look.

MARISSA: So while that Power and Control Wheel tends to cover dating violence more for teens, there are also certain elements of abuse that may be seen in young adult relationships, primarily between students. The Power and Control Wheel that I'm going to walk through is designed to show what dating violence can look like on college campuses; we'll also be linking this wheel on our website too.

So actually, a lot of the things that Nouchee covered is a part of this wheel, there's a lot of overlap. So the emotional abuse, sexual abuse, the isolation and threats, intimidation, all takes place on this wheel as well. But there are some other things that this wheel highlights.

First off is academic abuse, this could look like starting fights on purpose before a big test or assignment, transferring classes to monitor you, causing grades to suffer by controlling attendance or assignments, or cheating off of you without your consent. Another tactic could be possessiveness and harassment, so following a partner, showing up uninvited, or acting entitled to your body or your time. This could also look like monitoring or hacking into your phone, social media, school account, etc. You might also see manipulation or limiting of your independence, so forcing you to sign a lease with them, or controlling your friend group and/or your extracurriculars. Physical abuse is also at play here too, so hitting, kicking, shoving, throwing, destroying objects or property, holding you down, choking, or harming pets, just to name a few.

This list isn't exhaustive, so if there's other things that you've experienced that feel abusive, that's just as valid even if we didn't talk about them here. These are just some more common tactics that we typically see for teens, young adults, college students, and again, we'll have these resources available on our website.

**NOUCHEE:** We thought it was important to include some teen abuse statistics to shed more awareness on this topic. Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experienced physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year. One in three adolescents in the US is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner. Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 experience intimate partner violence at a rate that's almost triple the national average. And violent behavior typically begins between the ages of 12 and 18.

**MARISSA:** Those statistics are so incredibly important to shed light on, and they really illustrate how common dating violence is, even when it might not be something that's talked about as often as it should be. Next, we want to talk about red flags. If you're new to this concept of red flags, they are behaviors in a person that might make us feel uncomfortable, or might make us stop and question what we're seeing, especially in potential partners or friends. We're going to contrast those red flags with something called green flags, or behaviors that are good to see in other people, things that make us feel safer around that person. I will be narrating a couple of examples of red flags, and Nouchee will provide a green flag to contrast—let's get started! So, an example of a red flag is someone making decisions for you without considering your opinion.

NOUCHEE: And in contrast, a green flag is collaborating on decisions, listening to your wants and needs and meeting in the middle.

MARISSA: Another example of a red flag is someone wanting to control where you go and needing to know where you are constantly because they do not trust you.

NOUCHEE: And again, a green flag to this is wanting to know where you are because they genuinely care about your safety, such as checking in to see if you got home okay.

MARISSA: You might identify a red flag to be somebody pressuring you to do things that make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

NOUCHEE: And a green flag is respecting your “no” and suggesting doing an activity that you all can enjoy together.

MARISSA: A red flag might look like somebody getting mad when you spend time with someone else or becoming jealous when you do well.

NOUCHEE: A green flag is offering to get together another time, and supporting your success.

MARISSA: And lastly, you might be noticing a red flag if you notice somebody's not believing your problems are important, and that they want to focus only on themselves.

NOUCHEE: And again, a green flag is lending their support when you need it and “shares the mic”.

MARISSA: Absolutely. And, you know, we could go on and on with more examples of red flags versus green flags. If at any time you have any questions about this, feel free to reach out to an advocate, local hotline, or even a friend to identify some of these things. These can also be helpful in determining where your boundaries are. Those red flags make us feel uncomfortable, we get that sort of gut feeling like “ooh, something's up,” and these green flags make us feel happy, they make us feel respected.

On that note, that brings us into talking about healthy relationships, so finding people that will show us a lot of these green flags. Equality should be at the core of a healthy relationship, treating each partner with respect and understanding. And even though we've mainly referenced partners, healthy relationships don't just fall into romantic relationships. Your friends should also make you feel respected and like an equal, and just the same, your family should make you feel respected and like an equal. We can talk about healthy relationships in pretty much any context when we're interacting with other people. Surrounding equality, we're also going to want to look for open communication, so the ability to talk openly with one another, listen to one another. We're going to want to see the ability to make mutual choices; one partner or friend isn't always dominating in the decision making. In a healthy relationship, boundaries are respected. There is time to be together as well as apart, and that is understood, respected, and encouraged by each person. You're allowed to be yourself and part of that unit, you know, those aren't mutually exclusive! Lastly, in a healthy relationship, you trust each other. With these people you feel like you can be honest around them, and you feel like they're honest around you, too. There's that built mutual trust. And on that note, if you see a loved one needing some help with an unhealthy or abusive relationship, Nouchee is going to walk through how you can support them.

NOUCHEE: We know that some of our listeners may be using this information to evaluate their own relationship. We also know that there are some listeners who may want to help a friend out in need or a family member who they know is experiencing this as well. We wanted to leave you all with some tips on how to be a support person. So, firstly, making sure that you are watching for unhealthy behaviors in your and your friends' relationships because everyone deserves to feel safe and empowered. Another great tip is to tell your friend that you are concerned for their safety. It's really important to listen non-judgmentally and really support their decisions. Do not blame, shame, or guilt them and acknowledge that the abuse is not their fault. And we also suggest that you encourage them to seek resources if that's something that they're comfortable doing. So again, The Women's Center hotline is a resource that anyone could use. Our number is 262-542-3828. And another resource is [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org). Their helpline number is 866-331-9474 or you can also text, all one word, "loveis" to 22522.

MARISSA: Yes, those are some great resources to utilize! Again, if you are in the Waukesha or Greater Milwaukee area, we are a resource for you, and outside of our area, your local domestic violence and sexual assault agency is a good resource as well. Love Is Respect is a national program, so if you're not local to us, they can be a really good place to start and get some initial questions answered.

And lastly, I want to put it out there that one of the most important things to consider is context with all of this. So, what you deem to be a healthy relationship might not exactly match up with what someone else considers healthy, and in most cases, this is perfectly

normal and okay. For instance, you might really value when your partner surprises you, or asks if you got home safely, but your friend might feel uncomfortable when their partner tries those things because it violates their boundaries. The important thing here is to connect the specific behaviors back to equality, open communication, mutual choice, respected boundaries, and trust. These traits are non-negotiable, and thinking about specific behaviors in this way can help determine where you and your partner (or friend, or other loved one) stand in terms of a healthy relationship.

NOUCHEE: Thank you for joining us to learn more about Starting the CONVO on Healthy Teen Relationships. Our next session will be “Adult Children & Domestic Violence: Telling Children About Abuse”.

The Women’s Center focuses our work in partnering with clients to overcome barriers and gain a life free from violence. Our work is grounded in equity, upheld by inclusion, accountability, self-reflection, and continual growth.

We believe that it is important for survivors to feel seen and heard. We believe that Black Lives Matter because we cannot end violence without addressing the distinct injustices that Black and Indigenous People of Color face. We know that all forms of oppression are ultimately connected, and when we center individuals most impacted, we are also supporting survivors who have faced any form of violence. While we are not experts in anti-racism work, we aspire to be allies in this movement; we all have a responsibility to contribute to unlearning racism and intersecting forms of oppression that take place in our communities.

If you would like to talk with an advocate about your own experience with abuse, please call our 24-Hour Hotline at 262.542.3828. Learn more about The Women’s Center at [www.twcwaukesha.org](http://www.twcwaukesha.org), and find the resources mentioned on this episode by clicking Media & Events, then Podcasts on our website.

Thank you and be well.