

Being 'shoved around' by boyfriend is not OK

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Re: Dec. 1 Teen Care column

I commend Diane Shea on her counsel to Steph, age 19, in a recent column.

Steph shared concern toward her boyfriend's binge drinking -- as well as his behaviour when intoxicated -- and Ms. Shea offered some no-nonsense information regarding addiction in response.

I am writing, however, to add an additional caveat I believe deserves attention.

Steph indicated her boyfriend had "shoved her around a few times" while intoxicated. She went on to express unease, as he was "a big guy," and had, thus far, refused to take any responsibility for his actions.

If you were in a car accident because you were drunk while driving, you would still be held accountable for the accident. Just the same, drinking is no excuse, defence or explanation for abusive behaviour.

It is common for young women to minimize violence in their intimate relationships: who would want to acknowledge that the person they love is harming them? But the reality -- such as what Steph is indeed describing -- is that violence does happen, even in teen relationships.

Statistically, 12 per cent of young (18-24) women reported at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner in a one-year period, compared with the national average of three per cent of all married women.

Unaddressed, things tend to get worse instead of better.

I encourage Steph to talk to someone she trusts about her situation -- a teacher, parent, friend or social worker. I also encourage her not minimize or discount any fears for her safety -- she knows the best what is going on in her relationship.

The Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services of Halton (SAVIS) provides free, confidential and non-judgmental 24-hour support to all survivors of violence. We advocate against violence in the community at large and promote prevention through community education.

Currently, we run a discussion group called RSVP (Relationship Skills for Violence Prevention) for young women between the ages of 14-19.

The group is specifically for girls who feel at risk of getting involved in an unhealthy relationship, or just want to know more about choosing a healthy one.

For more information, call 905-825-3622.

I wish Steph the best of luck.

Nicole Pietsch, Sexual Assault & Violence Intervention Services (SAVIS) of Halton