

# NYC Healthy Relationship Training Academy Newsletter

## February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

It's that time of year again when we come together as a nation to raise awareness about a very important issue. In New York City, 11% of high school students report that they have been hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by a partner. And, this statistic does not include non-physical types of abuse such as verbal or emotional abuse. Young people deserve an opportunity to learn more about this complex, and life-influencing issue.

How will you recognize dating violence awareness month this year? Ideas include

hosting an event, doing a group project, or holding educational workshops. The Academy also has posters, brochures and palm cards that can be distributed. Give us a call at (212) 788-3156 to request materials!

To find out more about Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month, visit [www.teendvmonth.org](http://www.teendvmonth.org).

**TEEN**  
dating violence  
**awareness**  
**MONTH**

We asked some of our Peer Educators why they think it is important to have an awareness month for teen dating violence:

"Raising awareness of dating violence helps us reform our view about the issue, because an abuser may use strategies other than physical violence."

- Jorge Espinosa, Peer Educator

"People aren't aware of dating violence, and it's an important issue for teens to know about. Also, it's not just about females, males are affected by dating violence too."

- Farley Pierre-Louis, Junior Peer Educator

"It's important to have a recognized time to think about this issue on a national scale, especially because dating violence isn't taken seriously in a number of places around the country."

- Keren Sharon, Senior Peer Educator

## Henry Street Settlement wins the 2012 Educators' Choice Award

The Academy would like to recognize Henry Street Settlement by presenting them with the Academy's 2012 Educators' Choice Award. As of January 1,

2012, Henry St. has hosted 24 workshops with 433 participants since August 2008. Henry St. goes above and beyond to make sure the young adults in several of their programs have an opportunity to participate in the Academy's workshops.

Henry Street provides a myriad of supportive services to community members, including job placement and training,

supportive and transitional housing, and health care programs. We are thankful that Henry Street Settlement has taken the initiative to make sure their program participants learn about dating violence and healthy relationships by hosting workshops with the Academy. To learn more about Henry Street please visit their website at [www.henrystreet.org](http://www.henrystreet.org).

"At Henry Street Settlement the staff members are very nice and the students are so much fun to be around. Some of the students have been through a lot, and they still have a great receptive attitude."

-Sophia Dijan, Senior Peer Educator

### Inside this issue:

Dating Violence Awareness Month 1

2012 Educators' Choice Award 1

Healthy Ways to Respond to Anger 2

Educator Spotlight 2



### Our Latest Numbers

As of January 1 2012, we have held **1,249** workshops, reaching **24,819** youth since the Academy's inception in 2005!



### Contact us!

NYC Healthy Relationship Training Academy  
Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence  
100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10038  
OCDVAcademy@cityhall.nyc.gov  
(212) 788-3156  
[www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence/academy](http://www.nyc.gov/domesticviolence/academy)

## Talking about Healthy Ways to Respond to Anger



Anger, as an emotion, has a bad reputation. Growing up, many people are taught that they should not get angry, and/or that anger is a bad thing. However, feeling angry is a natural, human reaction to something that is upsetting. Anger is as an emotional response to a threat to your sense of self-worth, your basic values or convictions, and/or your physical well-being, which extends to loved ones. Note that anger is a signal that some sort of change is needed, either immediately or long-term. When the response is appropriate, anger is healthy and even could be necessary in order to establish healthy boundaries in a relationship.

In the fall of 2011, the Academy added a new activity option to its workshop curricula on Healthy vs. Unhealthy Responses to Anger. This activity helps participants characterize different ways people respond to anger, and identify healthy responses that they can implement in their own lives. Facilitators encourage participants to think about where anger comes from, and what are some healthy responses to anger. The participants consider scenarios in which they might be angry with another person, or they are interacting with someone who is angry with them.

This activity is offered in tandem with an activity on styles of communication, during which participants learn about assertive communication strategies. We encourage young people to speak directly, honestly, and respectfully rather than yelling, playing games, or ignoring a problem. Healthy strategies can be challenging to implement in real life, especially since a lot of communication takes place via cell phones and the internet. Technology can hinder someone's ability to express themselves clearly and/or accurately interpret the meaning behind a message. To avoid miscommunication, we encourage face-to-face conversations about important relationship issues. Also, many teens react quickly without thinking about the effects of their actions, such as using all caps in a text message. It is important to offer teens an opportunity to practice healthy communication skills, as well as to model healthy communication.

This conversation is particularly important because of the commonly held myth that abuse happens because someone has an anger management problem. While someone who is abusive may express anger in unhealthy ways, it is not the root cause. Abusive

relationships are really about a *pattern* of behaviors used to exert *power and control* over a partner. Some abusive partners can be very controlling without being angry at all. However, anger cannot be ignored as a component of relationships, and it is important for young people to have a chance to learn about healthy ways they can respond to anger in their own lives.

### Examples of *unhealthy* responses to anger:

- Suppressing or ignoring feelings of anger.
- Abusing drugs/alcohol.
- Texting to someone in all capital letters.
- Posting a mean or private statement to a Facebook page.

### Examples of *healthy* responses to anger:

- Using "I statements" that communicate your feelings instead of assigning blame. For example, you can say "I *feel* upset when you do not respond to my messages."
- Giving yourself time to process the actions/words that made you angry.
- Talking to a friend or family member about what made you angry.
- Communicating assertively by remaining calm, speaking directly and respectfully, and listening well without interrupting.

## Educator Spotlight: Rachel Dart, Senior Trainer



Rachel Dart, Senior Trainer

In each newsletter we like to highlight the strengths of our Peer Educator

staff, who make the Academy's workshops so effective and fun! Rachel Dart is a key member of our team, especially because she interacts with participants in a fun and engaging way while providing the facts about dating violence and healthy relationships. Rachel joined the Academy in January 2009, and has facilitated 160 workshops with teens and 21 staff training sessions. In January 2012, Rachel Dart was promoted to the position of Senior Trainer. Rachel has also helped the project in developing new ways to

engage participants and she has helped her fellow peer educators develop their skills as facilitators.

Rachel attended New York University, where she worked as a peer educator for the Office of Health Promotion. Rachel also directs theater programs and participates in an improv group.

One workshop host commented,  
"Rachel is an amazing speaker who provides relevant and meaningful information."  
—Greater Ridgewood Youth Council