

# *Ambassadors of Love & Respect:*

Involving Peer Educators in addressing Teen Dating Violence



# Ambassadors of Love & Respect:

Involving Peer Educators in addressing Teen Dating Violence

love & respect

Preventing Teen Dating Violence

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# Introduction

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This brochure is an outcome of the international project supported by the Erasmus+ Programme called Ambassadors of Love & Respect. The goal of the project was to train and involve young people as peer educators in an awareness and prevention campaign against Teen Dating Violence (TDV). There were 29 individuals involved in this project that lasted for 15 months, but the total number of those who benefited from its outcomes was much bigger, especially thanks to the peer educators who helped us to reach over 1500 young people in 6 countries.

The project Ambassadors of Love & Respect was a part of a bigger international partnership focusing on the problem of TDV and it has been an incredible journey for all the organisations and individuals involved. For most of us it has been a first experience of working with the peer educators and therefore it was not a great learning only for the young volunteers, but also for their coordinators and mentors.

Fortunately, all the organisations involved in the project had an extensive experience of working within the fields of gender based violence, education or youth that they have contributed with, more specifically:

**ProFem** (Czech Republic) has been running projects on TDV prevention since 2012; they conducted research on TDV and other forms of violence among youth; they focus on gender equality. They have experience with online counselling helpline for victims.

**Sakhli** (Georgia) has 19 years of experience with direct work with victims of gender-based and sexual violence (including youth and children), they brought a psychological and mental-health perspective to the project.

**Society Without Violence** (Armenia) runs prevention programs on gender based violence and sexual education, has experiences with targeting the rural and disadvantaged youth, involving volunteers and peer educators.

**Hazzissa** (Austria) is a recognised organization focused on prevention and education in sexualised violence. Among other activities, they are experts in educating parents and professionals such as social workers and teachers in this topic to help prevent the violence.

**Foundation Centro Studi Villa Montesca** (Italy) is a professional in educational and research activities. They bring innovative approaches into le-



arning and targeting the marginalized social groups. They are experienced in managing large interdisciplinary projects.

**Fundacion Privada Indera** (Spain) works with the women's rights and with prevention programmes for youth. They work with the alternative methods in education and they can bring other view in this project.

We have decided to create this brochure in order to share our experience from this project and from working with the peer educators for about a year. Please look at it as a study case - we have written down how this process worked for us, what we have learnt from it and what was the feedback from our Youth Ambassadors - the peer educators involved in Love & Respect project, hoping that it may be useful for other organisations who might be considering going on this journey and who are looking for the experience of those before them.

We hope it will be an inspiring reading.



# *Love & Respect - Preventing teen dating violence II*

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“Love & Respect - Preventing teen dating violence II” was long-term international partnership of 7 organisations from 7 countries (Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Italy, Spain), supported by Key Action 2 of Erasmus+ Programme, with an aim to work on prevention of intimate partner violence in the relationships of young people (Teen Dating Violence - TDV).

It involved organisations with extensive experience in dealing with domestic violence, sexual and gender based violence, education and prevention. The organisations decided to form the partnership as a reaction on lack of research, legislation and activities targeting TDV in their countries and on the European level in general.

The objectives of the project were the following:

- To highlight the TDV problem and advocate for better and systematic prevention on national and European levels;
- To develop innovative tools for prevention of TDV (mobile application - quiz);
- To raise awareness about TDV and healthy relationships among youths;
- To create a platform for cooperation and sharing of experiences and best practices;
- To increase competencies of youth workers and educators in effective prevention of TDV

Target groups of the project were:

- Youth workers and educators in need of new skills, tools and mechanisms for TDV prevention,
- Teenagers who lack information about healthy relationships and are at risk of TDV,
- Stakeholders and policymakers,
- Indirectly the public in general, that will profit from prevention of TDV.

The project had four main outcomes:



## **1. Research**

As part of this activity, we implemented quantitative research to map the incidence of intimate partner violence among teenagers, the types and forms of teen dating violence and its consequences. We have realized this research in all partner countries. The research was realized via the online questionnaire on a representative sample of 1 000 persons in each country. The composition of the respondents corresponds to a representative sample so that the research results can be used as argumentative material in lobby activities with the relevant stakeholders etc. The local researches were followed by the comparative research. We used the results of the research to effectively target other activities.

## **2. Social media campaign**

We created the groups on social media in each country, either on Facebook, Instagram or both, depending on which social network is more popular among young people in each country. Young people from our target group were invited to join and discuss about the topics related to healthy relationships and Teen Dating Violence. The content was created and the discussions were led by youth workers and young volunteers (peer educators) from partner organisations. Different informational materials, videos, photos or websites dealing with TDV issues were uploaded and shared in these groups. We have tried to encourage and stimulate a discussion about healthy relationships and violence and educate the youth on those topics by diverse interactive materials and campaigns.

## **3. Online platform**

The online platform <http://love-and-respect.org/> is published in all the national languages and English. It is divided into two sections – one section for professionals and one for young people. Professionals can find national legislation research, thanks to which they can learn how the TDV is addressed by national laws in partner countries. They can also find European legislation research, articles about TDV or tips and information on how to address this topic in education. The youth workers can also use the Library that contains number of materials, videos, leaflets, as well as educational modules on TDV that can be used in the classrooms or youth clubs. Young people can also find articles explaining TDV and healthy relationship, they can do a quiz to find out, whether they are in a toxic relationship, they can find contacts to helping organizations if they are experiencing violence in their relationship or read questions and answers regarding these topics.



#### **4. Online quizzes for youth**

The last activity of the project was creation of 4 interactive quizzes for youth. The quizzes have been created and commented by educators, psychologists and social workers to ensure different views on the form of the quiz. The content is based on the results of comparative research, focusing on those areas that are most neglected according to the research results. The aim of the quizzes is to provide an interesting and entertaining way through which young people can test their relationship and their knowledge. The quizzes are also available in 8 language versions (partner organizations languages and English) and cover the topics of Healthy relationships, Digital abuse, Sexuality and Self love.





# *Ambassadors of Love & Respect*

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During the implementation of the project “Love & Respect - Preventing teen dating violence II” and especially during the phase of planning the social media awareness campaign, we have encountered the challenge of how to approach the teenagers and young people who were the target group of this campaign, in a way that will be appropriate and most beneficial. We have planned to share the positive examples, inform about different forms of violence young people might experience in their relationships and mainstream the understanding of what is a healthy relationship.

Research suggests that young people are more likely to hear and personalize messages, and thus to change their attitudes and behaviours, if they believe the messenger is similar to them and faces the same concerns and pressures. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive influence of their peers on youth's health behaviours, in regards to various aspects, such as relationships, sexuality, violent behaviours, substance use, social exclusion/inclusion etc.

Therefore we decided to involve the “youth ambassadors” - the peer educators, who the teenagers might identify with better, get inspired from and feel free to engage in communication with. Peer education draws on the credibility that young people have with their peers, leverages the power of role modeling, and provides flexibility in meeting the diverse needs of today's youth and it can support young people in developing positive group norms and in making healthy, positive decisions in their relationships.

At the same time, we believe that empowering specific youngsters as peer educators will extend the impact of the project beyond its duration and will have a larger effect on the young people in their communities. For those reasons we decided to develop a new project called “Ambassadors of Love & Respect” that consisted of two mobility activities for selected group of young peer educators from Armenia, Austria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Italy and Spain and was supported by Key Action 1 of Erasmus+ Programme. The aim of the project was to empower and develop the competences of the Youth Ambassadors to be able to promote the principles of healthy relationships and raise awareness on TDV in their everyday life, among their peers and also through the “Love & Respect” campaign in which they were involved.



The partner organisations set the following objectives:

- Create and pilot the model of involvement of youth ambassadors in TDV prevention
- To bring together youth ambassadors from different countries, discuss their experience, involvement in the project and attitudes towards the topic
- To provide the youth ambassadors/peer youth workers with extensive knowledge on the topics of TDV and healthy relationships
- To involve the youth ambassadors into decision making about the communication campaign on TDV on social media
- To improve the youth ambassadors' competences in using social media and creating engaging content for the awareness campaign on TDV
- To identify and prevent the risks of being peer educator/youth ambassador combating TDV
- To provide continuous mentoring and professional supervision to the peer youth ambassadors
- To assess and evaluate the model of the youth ambassadors involvement at the end of the project
- To plan further involvement of empowered youth ambassadors in new projects preventing TDV.

The international activities took place in Rustavi, Georgia (10 - 15th September 2018) and in Prague, Czech Republic (8 -11th July 2019). The first activity was a training course, where the youngsters met and went through a series of presentations, lectures, discussions, simulation games and practical exercises, in order to gain knowledge about TDV, the objectives of the campaign, tips for working with young people and also with social media. The second activity was an evaluation seminar where the peer educators met again to share and assess the outcomes of their work and also reflect on the process of the cooperation of the organisations that work on topics related to SGBV with the young peer educators. This brochure is a summary of this reflection and also a study case of how was this process implemented.



# *What is Teen Dating Violence?*

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During adolescence, relationships are a very important part of the socialization and have a big impact on developing individual norms and values. Healthy relationships promote the development of autonomy, helps to increase their self-esteem and give teenagers the opportunity to pursue a range of goals, including the desire of familiarity, support, sexual experience and gaining status. And particular in this formative time, teenagers often make their first experiences with different types of violence in relationships.

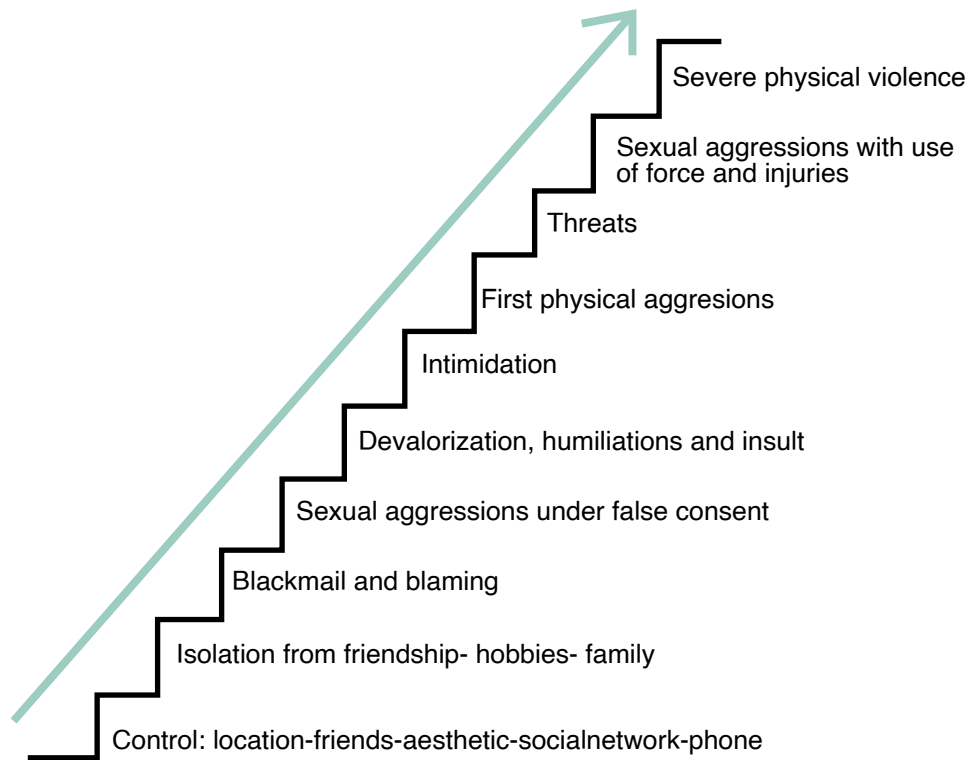
Teen dating violence occurs between two people in a close relationship and includes physical, sexual violence, emotional/psychological abuse, and stalking. It is a pattern of behaviours one person uses to gain and maintain power and control over their partner. It can occur in person or electronically and may occur between a current or former partner.

According to research conducted in five countries involved in the "Love & Respect" project, on average 54,8 % of young people or teenagers (who have some experience with relationships or dating) have been or are experiencing some kind of repeated violent behaviour from their partner for a longer time.



# Types of TDV

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source : extracted from Ruiz's study (2016)

**Psychological/Emotional** violence include name calling, shaming, embarrassing on purpose, yelling and screaming, keeping you away from friends, threats, making you feel guilty, constant monitoring, damaging property, humiliation, threats to expose your secrets, starting rumours about you. Emotional abuse may not cause physical damage, but it does cause emotional pain, harms sense of self-worth, lowers confidence and self-esteem. As a result, you may start to blame yourself for your partner's abusive behaviour.

**Sexual violence** refers to any action that pressures or coerces someone to do something sexually they don't want to do and includes: unwanted kissing or touching, forcing someone to participate in unwanted, unsafe or de-grading sexual activity, sexual harassment, rape or attempted rape,



refusing to use condoms, sexual contact with someone who is very drunk or unable to give a clear consent, forcing someone to watch pornography. It is important to know that just because the victim “didn’t say no,” doesn’t mean that they consented. Sometimes physically resisting can put a victim at a bigger risk for further abuse.

Examples of **physical violence** include: pushing or pulling; pulling hair, grabbing to prevent the person from leaving, throwing something at a person, scratching, punching, slapping, biting, strangling or kicking, using a knife, gun other weapons.

**Stalking** refers to a pattern of harassing or threatening tactics, including when a person repeatedly watches, follows or harasses another person, and that makes her feel afraid or unsafe.

Violence on the internet is often very personal, but it can also be sexist, misogynic or downright racist. The perpetrators usually have the goal of silencing the victim, or overpowering them. But the most common type of violence on the internet in youth relationships is monitoring. That means to control the phone of the partner, to restrict the contact to friends or family and to monitor the offline activities of the partner through new media.

There is no excuse for abuse of any kind. It is very important to let young people know that first of all they need to think about safety.

Everybody deserves to feel safe, respected and accepted in their relationship. Healthy relationships are based on equality and respect and either partner should never do or say anything that makes the other feel bad, lowers their self-esteem or manipulates them.

Every person in a relationship has a right to set boundaries that should be respected. This includes the right to privacy, to live free from violence and abuse, to decide who to date or not date, to choose when/if to have sex and who to have sex with, to say no at any time, to hang out with friends and to have activities without the partner, to feel safe and respected, to end a relationship that isn’t right.

Many teens who are involved in an abusive relationship do not report it because they feel afraid and ashamed to tell friends and family. This can cause serious physical, emotional, and mental damage to a young person. On the other hand, healthy relationship can have a positive effect on an emotional development of teenagers. Moreover, some studies on the topic of TDV refer to the existence of myths about romantic love and how to live



it. By myth we can understand a preconception of ideas that, referred to romantic love, show a kind of "shared truths" that perpetuate the unequal roles and power asymmetries of boys towards girls and that are assumed in courtship as part of the relationship (Ruiz, 2016).

Some of those myths might be:

- **The myth of the better half:** it is based on the belief of the predestination of the couple as the only possible choice, the union of two twin souls, as if Cupid knew in advance who should shoot the arrows to. This false belief is based on the ideal of complement by which we think that our lives are not complete until we find the other half. Sinks roots in Classical Greece with courtly love and romance. Their acceptance may lead to the risk of being disappointed in the "chosen couple" or on the contrary to think that being the one that is predestined we must "accept" what we do not like.

- **Pairing myth:** idea that holds that the couple, as well as monogamy, are something universal and natural in all cultures. This belief leaves out of the "normative" to those people who do not meet the "expected end" of having a partner.

- **Myth of jealousy:** a belief that relates jealousy with true love and even as an essential ingredient, the lack of them would be related to non-love. A myth that can lead to selfish, repressive and even violent behavior. This myth is a real problem in relation to gender violence because it refers to the love field something that is no more than a form of domination and power. A myth introduced by Christianity as guarantor of exclusivity and fidelity.

- **Fallacy of change for love:** an idea that makes the person in love believe in a possible change of the other person. A myth that is usually aimed at girls turning love into a struggle to save men, making them the saviors of their boyfriends. Through this myth women are placed in a continuous sense of hope (Lagarde, 2005).

- **Myth of the compatibility of love and abuse:** it is the consideration that in love it is compatible to harm the other person, following the phrases "those who fight are those who love each other", "if they love you they will make you cry". A myth that legitimizes any harmful or violent behavior in the name of love.

- **True love forgives / endures everything:** related to the previous myth, we find this idea that in love everything is forgivable, an argument based on blackmail that aims to manipulate the will of the person by imposing the criteria themselves. It is reflected a lot in phrases like "if you really loved



me you would do it", "if you do not forgive me".

- **Love is a process of depersonalization:** the previous belief leads to a forgetting of the self to identify with the other person. The renunciation of the personal self would be lived as a show of selfishness.

- If you love me you must renounce intimacy: and therefore, if we are one for another, there should be no secrets, each person should know everything about the other.

- **The myth of the red thread:** it comes from the Japanese culture and is based on the belief that people predestined to know each other are joined by a red thread tied to their little fingers.



# Consequence of TDV

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The consequences of teen dating violence are multifaceted and develop differently for each individual. They may occur in the short, medium and long-term and become manifested on a psychological and physical level. The effects of experienced violence may occur over the course of a life-span and concern different areas: Relationship problems, sexual dysfunctions, addictive disorders, disturbed adaptation, depression, eating disorders, anxiety disorders, etc. compromise the lives of many adults. The impacts concern not only the individual, but also their social environment. Therefore, the benefit of prevention intervention is vast when considering individuals as well as the overall economy.

The study conducted by Jouriles et al. (2017), does nothing more than confirm the existence of this risk through a relationship mediated by the psychological trauma that results from being a victim of this type of violence in adolescence. As noted by Callahan et al. (2003), post-traumatic stress (PTSD) is a particularly persistent consequence among women and men who have experienced very high and acute levels of TDV, as well as episodes of dissociation, anxiety and depression, all related to the presence of PTSD. The encounter of this relationship mediated by the trauma throws a little hope in the possibility of breaking the cycle of violence and avoiding future victimizations through a good program of treatment and prevention of psychological sequels in young people.

Also the research conducted as a part of Love & Respect - Preventing Teen Dating Violence II shows that young people who experience any form of TDV suffer from problems such as sleeping disorders, learning difficulties, nausea and in some cases even suicidal thoughts.





# What is Peer Education?

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A young person's peer group has a strong influence on the way he or she behaves. This is true of both risky and safe behaviours. Not surprisingly, young people get a great deal of information from their peers on issues that are especially sensitive or culturally taboo. Peer education makes use of peer influence in a positive way.

## Who is Peer?

A peer is someone who belongs to the same social group as another person or group. The social group may be based on age, sex, sexual orientation, occupation, socio-economic status and other factors. In the context of Ambassadors of Love & Respect, the peers were young people of the same or similar age as our target group (16 - 26 years-old) who have shared cultural references and come or live in the same country as our target group.

A young person's peer group has a strong influence on the way she or he behaves and, not surprisingly, young people get a great deal of information from their peers, especially on issues that are sensitive or are not normally explored in mainstream education settings, including through the school curriculum, or even might be kind of a taboo, such as it is with the relationships of young people and their sexuality in some of the countries involved in our project.

## What is peer education and how does it work?

Peer education makes use of peer influence in a positive way. Since gender-related and relationships-related issues are particularly sensitive, peer education offers a way to approach the youth within a safe environment. In contrast to adult educators and professionals, peer educators have 'equal status' with young people and can therefore gain more trust and credibility. They are less likely to be seen as an authority figure 'preaching' from a judgemental position about how young people should behave. They have shared cultural references, speak the same language as the members of the target group, use social media in a similar way and can better understand their feelings, thoughts and experiences.



Peer education is also a way to empower young people. It offers them the opportunity to become agents of change, to gain a deeper understanding of gender-related issues and TDV, as well as develop skills that will serve them for life such as confidence, public speaking, team work, communication skills, group coordination, presentation and listening skills.

## Who IS and who is NOT peer educator

Peer educators are persons use simple listening and problem solving skills in combination with learned knowledge, skills and lived experience to assist people who are their peers. They are helping peers to find their own solutions to their own problems; not to solve their problems for them.

Peer educators are not the experts from the organisations, teachers, youth workers, psychologists, terapeuts or other medical experts. This also means that the peer educators and their target group must be aware that they cannot provide expert advice or create an impression that their support can replace a professional help if necessary.

In the context of Ambassadors of Love & Respect our peer educators went through a week long training that will be described lower, in order to gain enough knowledge about the topic of TDV, the tools they would be using, as well as practical exercises of being a peer educator.

## Use of peer education

Peer education can be used with many populations and age groups for various goals. One of the main directions of use of peer education has been HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health programmes around the world among groups including young people, sex workers, people whom practice unprotected sex, or people who use intravenous drugs.

Peer education is also associated with efforts to prevent tobacco, alcohol and other drug use among young people. Peer educators can be effective role models for young adolescents by promoting healthy behavior, helping to create and reinforce social norms that support healthier behaviors, and to serve as an accessible and approachable health education resource (Main, 2002).

Peer education is useful in promoting healthy eating, food safety and physical activity amongst marginalized populations. Peer education can be also favorably used in medical education.



## Why peer education and how does it work?

When deciding to include a peer education programme in the activities of the organisation, the objectives are often to reinforce positive behaviours, to develop new recommended behaviours, or to change risky behaviours in a target group.

Why and how do people adopt new behaviours? The fields of health psychology, health education, and public health provide relevant behavioural theories that explain this process.

It is important to be aware of how the peer education work. There are multiple theories which try to explain this process and provide a theoretical base that explains why peer education is beneficial. Moreover, these theories can help guide the planning and design of peer education interventions:

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<sup>1</sup> All definitions adapted from the United Nations Population Fund Youth Peer Education Toolkit

<https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/Youth%20Peer%20Education%20Toolkit%20-%20The%20Training%20of%20Trainers%20Manual.pdf>



# *Theory of reasoned action*

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This theory states that the intention of a person to adopt a recommended behaviour is determined by:

- A person's subjective beliefs, that is, his or her own attitudes towards this behaviour and his or her beliefs about the consequences of the behaviour. For example, a young woman who thinks that using contraception will have positive results for her will have a positive attitude towards contraceptive use.
- A person's normative beliefs, that is, how a person's view is shaped by the norms and standards of his or her society and by whether people important to him or her approve or disapprove of the behaviour.

In the context of peer education, this concept is relevant because young people's attitudes are highly influenced by their perception of what their peers do and think. Also, young people may be motivated by the expectations of respected peer educators.

## *Social learning theory*

This theory is largely based upon the work of psychologist Albert Bandura. He states that people learn:

- Through direct experience.
- Indirectly, by observing and modelling the behaviour of others with whom the person identifies (for example, how young people see their peers behaving).
- Through training that leads to confidence in being able to carry out behaviour. This specific condition is called self-efficacy, which includes the ability to overcome any barriers to performing the behaviour. For example, using role plays to practise how and when to introduce a condom can be important in developing the self-confidence to talk about safer sex methods with a partner.

In the context of peer education, this means that the inclusion of interactive experiential learning activities are extremely important, and peer educators can be influential teachers and role models.



# *Diffusion of innovations theory*

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This theory argues that social influence plays an important role in behaviour change. The role of opinion leaders in a community, acting as agents for behaviour change, is a key element of this theory. Their influence on group norms or customs is predominantly seen as a result of person-to-person exchanges and discussions.

In the context of peer education, this means that the selected peer educators should be trustworthy and credible opinion leaders within the target group. The opinion leader's role as educator is especially important in informal peer education, where the target audience is not reached through formally planned activities but through everyday social contacts.

## *Theory of participatory education*

This theory states that empowerment and full participation of the people affected by a given problem is a key to behaviour change.

In the context of peer education, this means that many advocates of peer education believe that the process of peers talking among themselves and determining a course of action is key to the success of a peer education project.



## *Based on our experience...*

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In this chapter we are sharing our experience with working with the Youth Ambassadors - young peer educators working on the TDV awareness and prevention campaign for about a year.

The seven organisations involved in Love & Respect - Preventing Teen Dating Violence II decided to involve the peer educators in the social media campaign, in order to get closer to young people who might be experiencing violence in their relationships, who need accurate information about what is part of a healthy relationship and what is not. All the organisations agreed to involve the Youth Ambassadors on a voluntary basis, select them through an open call spread through their networks, try to involve both females and males, appoint a coordinator who will provide mentoring and supervision to the young volunteers, as well as oversee the accuracy of the content created by the Ambassadors.

Apart from that we planned two international meetings which were both directed at the development and learning for the Youth Ambassadors, team building with the other members of their team and the coordinator and setting the plan, and at the same time, as a motivation for the youngsters to join the project and experience the international gathering of like-minded young people from different countries in Georgia and the Czech republic.

All the following tips are collected during the second meeting, evaluation seminar, and are comments from the Youth Ambassadors, their coordinators and other representatives of the involved organisations. They should be used as an inspiration and also important points to consider when deciding whether to involve peer educators in your projects and how to facilitate their involvement.



# Benefits of working with the peer educators

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## Benefits for the organisations

*„The advantages of involving volunteers as peer educators might for NGO look so tiny, but they are so valuable“*

*“It is a mutual process – peer educators learn something but also brings something else”*

*- Ambassadors of Love & Respect*

**Gate keepers** - This point is connected to the very definition of peer educator - peer educators are crucial when contacting, communicating with and influencing the target group. Not only they know how to communicate with the youth (their peers), what they want to hear, how they want to interact (and through which channels), but they are very helpful even when contacting the target group (by involving their friends, acquaintances, classmates,...). This was the first step for all peer educators with the campaign and helpful at the beginning. Even though the teams consisted of the older experienced professionals, who knew how to communicate with young people, they were not able to reach them. The peer educators were not “standing above them”, but with them, they were relatable and explained the problem to the young people in more understandable language.

**Fresh perspective, critical thinking** - Peer educators bring an outside perspective. They are not working in the NGO and they might have different points of view and ask new questions. Peer educators might also be invited to give feedback on other services and activities organised by the professionals for youth, whether they sound attractive to a young person or not.

**New technology skills and knowledge** – Peer educators are from a generation that grows up with new technology. It is very natural for them to use them. They might have better knowledge of how to communicate using different social media than the professional employees of an NGO.



**Volunteering and motivation** – The peer educators were involved on a voluntary basis. They were full of motivation and energy. This might contribute and inspire the entire team in the NGO - bring new energy, new motivation, new activeness. However it is important to work with the motivation and some reward for the volunteers, and provide them with supervision, to prevent burn out.

### **Benefits for the peer educators**

*„You just keep learning every day.“*

*“It opens your mind.”*

*“It’s not just something I want to put to my CV, the whole volunteering process was also very important for me personally, because my motivation was also to do something meaningful, not just to gain another point for my CV.”*

*- Ambassadors of Love & Respect*

**Skills and knowledge** – Volunteers gain new knowledge and skills or improve those that they already have in several areas: theory (gender-based violence), communication, team work, emotional skills, analytical skills, technical/practical (work with Canva, Trello, social media), problem-solving skills, intercultural skills and knowledge, since the project was international, knowledge about EU and Erasmus+, knowledge about other countries’ contexts and situation there, how other NGOs in other countries work, how is the situation with gender-based violence or human rights, language skills – improving English, critical thinking, time management, public speaking skills, creativity, etc.

**Future studies or work** - Peer educators had an opportunity to be involved in something, they wouldn’t normally do or didn’t even know about the existence of the topic. The volunteering creates opportunities and advantages for their future professional development and careers. They get to know the NGO sector, learn how it works. They might be offered a job by the NGO, which is beneficial for both – NGO knows how the volunteer worked, they already learnt a lot of things about the organisation, they went through training. At the same time, by volunteering the peer educator has an opportunity to discover various things and activities so it might help them to realize what other direction they want to go.

**Personal grow** - The project allows the peer educators to grow personally. Through the stories of the young people and through learning about the





topic, they had a chance to think about their own relationships and look for better ones. They also used some of the skills when responding to their friends or family, but also in general whole volunteering experience is also something that helps them to get to know themselves better, reflect on their priorities, etc.

**Specifically for an international project** - The international aspect of the project was indeed a huge added value for the peer educators, as they had a chance to travel, to learn about other countries, NGOs or other professionals – which they wouldn't learn about if the project was only local.



# Limits and challenges of working with the peer educators

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*... What to consider before deciding for such a project?*

## *Challenges for the organisations*

**Time demanding** - Consider the long-term workload connected to the involvement of the peer educators. They should go through an extensive training that will cover all the areas related to their work, such as gender based violence, TDV, crisis intervention, social media skills. The coordinator/mentor should be working constantly with the team and be flexible enough to find time and opportunities with young volunteers who might have a lot of other activities and responsibilities. Consider creating a manual for the peer educators. If possible, create opportunities for the professional supervision of the peer educators.

**Being aware of the possible personal experiences with TDV** - There might be different motivations for young people to get involved as peer educators in a campaign against teen dating violence, but you should be aware that personal experience might be one of them (also considering how prevalent TDV is, there is a high chance that your peers have a personal experience with it). Be sensitive and empathetic when discussing the topic with the peer educators. If any of them directly mentions this motivation, offer counselling and supervision. The involvement in the campaign might re-enact the trauma.

**Responsibility** - Even though the organisation involves the peer educators in communicating with young people and creating the content on social media, it is eventually the organisation who is responsible for this content. You should set clear limits of how the content should be or how it will be approved before publishing, as the peer educators do not have all the professional knowledge and experience. Also set the standards for the situations when the peer educators are contacted by a victim and at which point the professional should take over the situation.

**Flexible time management** - The peer educators are students and have busy schedules, especially in specific periods, when they have exams etc.



**Flexible time management** - The peer educators are students and have busy schedules, especially in specific periods, when they have exams etc. It might be very challenging to find time for the meetings with the entire team, therefore the coordinator has to be very flexible and patient and ready to meet with the volunteers also outside of the usual working hours or during the weekends. On the other side, the meetings in person are very important for keeping the team spirit and motivation.

**Volunteering** - As the peer educators get involved on a voluntary basis, it might be a challenge to keep them motivated, responsible and accountable in the long-term perspective. Look for different ways to motivate them, for example their involvement might be recognised as an internship, there might be a specific professional interest you might help them with, they might be motivated by the team spirit and team work. At the same time, be aware that you should not overload the volunteers. Be very clear and specific from the very beginning, let them to formulate individual plans, mention their availability and needs and communicate openly when any changes or obstacles arise.

**Contract** - You can consider signing a written contract between the organisation and the peer educators about their involvement (for example if the international trainings are included in the project). However, this contract might be also developed by each volunteer and the coordinator and have a form of ground rules, expectations, learning agreement etc.

**Creating ownership** - When working on the content for the social media campaign, it is important to use the creativity of the peer educators and all the benefits they bring, such as speaking the same language as the target group. However, as mentioned above, the organisation is responsible for the accuracy of the content. It is important to look for the balance between the responsibility of the organisation to check the work of the peer educators and letting them to have a feeling of ownership and independence in their work, as it might be very demotivating if their ideas are constantly rejected.

**Growing together** - The team building activities might be a great tool for keeping the peer educators motivated. Find some time for the informal or entertaining activities with the peer educators where they can chat with each other and with the coordinator and/or other members of the organisation.



## *Challenges for the peer educators*

**Young people addressing young people** - The peer educators might sometimes not be or not feel that they are taken seriously and lack the professional authority. Some young people might be pointing out that they are not professionals and ask what do they know. On the other side they can get closer.

**Knowledge of the topic** - Even though peer educators undergo a training, they are not professionals, but they need to know the topic well. They need a guidance, learn where to find out more information, cope with the questions etc.

**Balance between information and entertainment** - When working on the campaign the peer educators (and their coordinators) have to think well about the balance between the fun and entertaining content that young people like to consume on the internet and that attracts their attention and creates engagement and serious information about TDV which should be delivered to them. Too much entertaining content might undermine the campaign but on the other side only too serious content will not be interesting for youngsters and they will not pay attention to it.

**Mental wellbeing** - The topic affects the peer educators on the personal level and might have an impact on their own emotions, the work of a peer educator in general might be stressful. It is important to offer the support and encourage the peer educators to express their feelings and ask for help.

**Time management** - The studies are a priority for the peer educator, but young people might also have other activities, hobbies or obligations. It is important to clearly formulate the expectations and the limits at the beginning and at any point of the cooperation and to be flexible and responsible.

**Being active at social media** - When the TDV campaign uses social media and the peer educators are expected to manage the communication and create social media content, they should have some passion or interest in social media. On the other hand, it is important to encourage the peer educators to also disconnect and not to spend time online all the time, possibly even have some digital detox from time to time, as excessive use of social media might lead to negative phenomena, such as anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. At the same time, it is also important to be aware that peer educators are exposing themselves on-line and they are at risk of becoming targets of hate speech or bullying. Discuss this with the peer educators and make sure that any such incident is discussed.



# *Process of involvement of the peer educators*

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## **Selection of peer educators**

- Peer educators need to show their interest in the topic, they should have enough information about the project.
- Peer educators need to have social competences, like empathy, responsibility, motivation to work for other people in their free time, work in teams and be independent.
- Peer educators should have a social background - they might be students of social work, educational sciences, psychology, or have an interest and basic knowledge about the topic. You can try to share the call with the students of specific faculties or schools.
- Selection process can be done with the use of little tasks to see whether they are really motivated and responsible.
- Experience in working with young people, for example at the summer-camps might be a big plus.
- Experience in social media – they should be active and creative.
- Select enough ambassadors to have a backup if someone leaves.
- It is recommended to have a diverse team - some ambassadors who are students of a social work, some who are interested in social media, teenagers, members of minority groups, strive for gender balance...

## **Working process**

- Training for ambassadors – plan more meetings in the process, skype meetings between the countries - international element is extremely motivating
- Extensive exchange among the countries – good for inspiration, coming up with new ideas for content, exchange of what works and what doesn't.
- Organize regular meetings where you discuss the process and come up with the ideas for new content.



- Try different communication channels to coordinate the work with the peer educators, for example Trello, Google Documents, What's up...)
- Make a plan for the upcoming months (at least one month) and special days ( for example Valentines day), have deadlines.
- Balance the pressure on peer educators - they are volunteers. Agree some working hours and times when you and them will not be available.
- Set little goals to keep the peer educators motivated, but keep the big goal to reduce violence in mind!
- Have professional supervision for the peer educators, maybe once a month or every other month.
- Organize also informal and team building activities for the ambassadors, spend time together, go for dinner, prepare some small reward for the ambassadors. It is good to work on building friendships between the peer educators.
- The organisation should find ways how to express respect for the work of the peer educators.
- Organize “real live” meetings or workshops where the followers - young people can come, they might ask more questions and talk about the topic with the peer educators and also with the professionals. Such meetings are very motivating and rewarding for the peer educators.

## Feedback and evaluation

- Ambassadors should write a monthly report in some form - for example summarize the content from Trello.
- Create space for regular feedback on the work of the peer educators, appreciate their work and be constructive if something should be changed. Give space to the peer educators to ask questions and also feedback what they need from the coordinator or the organisation.
- After longer time (couple of months) and also at the end of the project/co-operation, focus on deeper evaluation including the learning and personal development of the peer educators. Let them to write this down, issue a certificate or confirmation.



# *Role of the coordinator*

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## **Role**

- Responsible for the division of the work (distribution of the tasks). The role must be very clear from the beginning.
- Support and help with the tasks - participatory approach is important.
- Addresses individual needs, interests, development of the competencies of the peer educators and adjusts the tasks accordingly.
- Being a friend - may be a motivation for the peer educators but at the same time it may cause problems when the peer educators start feeling too familiar and for example stop delivering the work, be late for the meetings - The friendly vs. professional relationship should have limits.
- Problem solving - communication and agreements, trust building from both sites
- Holds the professional knowledge and experience.

## **Support to the peer educators**

- Should always be there for support connected with the tasks.
- Should learn how to give proper feedback.
- Should understand that the peer educators may have personal problems.
- Helping with creating the ideas and motivating the team.
- Providing the peer educators with tools, knowledge, connections, technical support.
- Showing examples of what is expected from the peer educators, being specific.
- Supporting the process of self-reflection and self-assessment.
- The coordinator should share their experiences from practice when it is needed and when it can contribute to the work of the peer educators.

## **Motivating the peer educators**

- Selecting the peer educators who are interested in the topic.



- Creating the opportunity to share the experience with the peer educators from other countries.
- Team building (food, drink, travelling), informal meetings, informal chat about the topic.
- Appreciate the work of peer educators, remember that they are volunteers, give positive feedback.
- Creating a meeting place “our place” in the office, café etc.
- Give small presents to the peer educators when possible, for example during the Christmas time.
- Create space for self-development, safe space for sharing.
- Involve the peer educators in some of the activities of the organisation, for example let them to share their experience with working on the campaign during the dissemination events, conferences etc.
- Provide further training, meetings with professionals, so they can improve their knowledge, keep learning.
- Seeing the results, organize face to face meeting with the target group.
- Searching for training - offering to the PE other learning opportunities
- Internship for students, giving the certificate with gained competencies

## What not to do?

- Controlling behaviour.
- Don't be a perfectionist and do not criticize the work of peer educators!
- Don't talk like a boss but rather like a friend.

## Team Work

- Setting clear roles.
- Understanding abilities and competences of the peer educators and setting the tasks accordingly.
- Having supervision in the team - once a month to meet and discuss the team cooperation, time management, how much time can volunteers dedicate to campaign in the upcoming month.
- Start with small goals, doing little by little (not to plan realize all ideas from the very beginning).
- Respect and assess the schedule of the peer educators.





- Set the roles from the beginning.
- Peer educators can be the deadline keepers.
- Regular meetings help motivation, communication and team work in general - every week.
- Using Trello for keeping the deadlines, track and division of tasks, calendar and work progress, Google Drive for bigger documents.

### *Challenges for the organisations*

- Words of support, positive feedback.
- Acknowledging the work of peer educators.
- Be honest and polite and respectful.
- Positive motivation, not to let the peer educators give up.
- Being a guide.

### *“Where I wanted to have a free hand?”*

- Creation of the content, bringing the ideas.
- Space to express myself.
- Coordinator - expecting ideas, not intervening.

### **Relationship PE/Coordinator**

- Respectful, supportive, friendly
- Emphatic in both ways.
- Not feeling as a boss
- Key the communication
- Being heard - when having personal problems - to hear that it's ok, that you don't have time for the campaign for some time...
- At the beginning ask PE about the expectations from him/her

### **Content**

- Coordinator sets the roles and limits, but gives freedom within (“Not to feel that I am only a tool for the realization of someone else's ideas”).
- Reviewing the content, having an agreement.



- Coordinator sets the roles and limits, but gives freedom within (“Not to feel that I am only a tool for the realization of someone else's ideas”).
- Reviewing the content, having an agreement.
- Have a space to make mistakes and learn from the mistakes.
- Set the confidence in the group - despite the age difference.



# Training Agenda for Peer Educators

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As it was mentioned several times before, the organisations should provide the peer educators with an extensive training. There are various ways and contexts in which the training can be organized - it can take place during a couple of weekends, it can be a longer process of preparation of the peer educators or it can be an intense activity when the entire team goes out of their usual everyday activities.

This was the case of our training that was not only intense, but also it was international and created an opportunity for the peer educators from 6 different countries to meet.

We offer this training here as an example of which topics should be covered before the peer educators can start working on an online awareness and prevention campaign against Teen Dating Violence.

Name of the activity	Objectives	Suggested methods/Tools
Getting to know each other & Team building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To create a friendly and open atmosphere for sharing and learning</li> <li>- To build friendships among the peer educators and coordinators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Name circle</li> <li>- Walk &amp; Talk - directed walk</li> <li>- Backpack of learning</li> </ul>
All about the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To put the campaign in the wider context of the entire project</li> <li>- To have the peer educators to understand their place in the bigger team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Buzz groups</li> <li>- Presentation</li> </ul>
Defining teen dating violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To understand what is TDV, how prevalent problem it is, what types of violence it involves, what are its consequences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Problem tree - group work</li> </ul>
What is a healthy relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reflect upon myths around relationships between teenagers.</li> <li>- To distinguish between a toxic and abusive relationship, and a healthy relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion in small groups: participants get sheets with the sentences about relationships, and groups must discuss if they are healthy or</li> </ul>



<p>What is a healthy relationship?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To reflect upon the principles and values of healthy relationships.</li> </ul>	<p>unhealthy relationships. Based on the appropriateness of the sentences, people mark the sentences with a green, yellow, or red sticker.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plenary discussion</li> </ul>
<p>Sexualized violence between teens and prevention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To stress the frequency of the TDV, to speak about the methods that can be used in order to raise awareness</li> <li>- To make sure the peer educators understand even more complicated terminology and have knowledge about some basic laws in their countries (eg. legal age of consent).</li> <li>- To understand the seriousness of the problem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation - data, terminology, importance of education against sexualized violence</li> <li>- Examples of situations - group discussion</li> </ul>
<p>Examples of activities &amp; methods for TDV prevention</p> <p>Open Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To get inspired from the campaigns from different countries:</li> <li>- That's not Cool <a href="http://www.facebook.com/ThatsNotCool/">www.facebook.com/ThatsNotCool/</a></li> <li>- Break the cycle: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/breakthecycle/">www.facebook.com/breakthecycle/</a></li> <li>- Love is Respect: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/loveisrespectpage/">www.facebook.com/loveisrespectpage/</a></li> <li>- No More: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/NO-MORE.org/">www.facebook.com/NO-MORE.org/</a></li> <li>- To give space to the peer educators to show their skills and to learn from each other (eg. social media, graphic design, photoshop, communication etc.)</li> <li>- To recognize the peer educator's skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation, quiz, videos</li> <li>- Open Space Technology</li> </ul>
<p>Research &amp; Country specifics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To discuss specific data from the research about TDV</li> <li>- To discuss what are the most common forms of GBV and TDV in each country, what is culturally tolerated etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small group work</li> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>



Introduction to Peer education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To introduce the concept of peer education.</li> <li>- To understand the context of the concept.</li> <li>- To have the volunteers understand what a peer educator can and cannot do.</li> <li>- To have the volunteers start thinking about their role as role educators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation</li> <li>- World Café - discussing the role and specifics of peer education in the small groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Who can be a good peer educator? Who cannot?</li> <li>2 What are the advantages and disadvantages of peer education?</li> <li>3 What can be the risks of being a peer educator?</li> <li>4 What the peer educator</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Working with youth & victims of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To understand the concept of crisis intervention</li> <li>- To understand the possibilities and limitations of peer educators when working with the victims of TDV</li> <li>- To understand better the responsibility the peer educators have</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentation</li> <li>- Practical exercise</li> <li>- Distribution of practical booklet (see Guidelines for peer educators)</li> </ul>
Workshop on Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To learn about social media</li> <li>- To learn and discuss what works and what doesn't</li> <li>- To learn about specifics of different social media platforms</li> <li>- To learn tools of measuring the engagement of the audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interactive workshop with an expert on social media</li> </ul>
Planning & Practice for social media campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To plan the content that can engage the target group</li> <li>- To develop communication mix</li> <li>- To see what are the possibilities and capabilities of the team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brainstorming of different tools and methods, types of posts that can be used</li> <li>- Group work</li> </ul>
Involvement of the peer educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To plan the process of cooperation with the peer educators</li> <li>- Specify the roles, means of communication, setting deadlines, setting the work agreements</li> <li>- Setting the mentoring and supervision plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group work</li> <li>- Presentation of Trello, Google Drive...</li> </ul>



Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- To evaluate the process</li><li>- To share thoughts on the beginning of the cooperation</li><li>- To analyze how the process have been going so far</li><li>- To reflect on the learning of the peer educators</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Time machine</li><li>- Evaluation pizza</li><li>- Written evaluation</li></ul>
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# Guidelines for the peer educators

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This part of the brochure is intended to provide basic information and practical tools to the peer educators working on prevention and spreading awareness about TDV. However it can be useful to anyone talking to teens experiencing difficulties.

It provides an introduction to the role of the peer educator and what she can do while you in contact with teens experiencing teen dating violence. Through practical examples of what to say and how to react to specific situations on one hand, and what is the best to avoid on the other, it should help the peer educator to navigate teens towards professional help, support them and make them feel welcomed and safe.

These guidelines also focus on the topic of psychological hygiene and self-care, and shows some basic tips to help coping with this sometimes difficult and demanding role - to talk about violence and to be there for the victims of violence might be a difficult and frustrating task and it is extremely important to take care of one's own mental health in the first place.

## *Principles of peer educators:*

The responsibility of the peer educator is to first listen then to assist; help with problems but not to tell peers what to do.

1. Peer Education programs share the following principles:

- Understanding that the people are more likely to hear and accept the information that is presented and modeled by their peers.
- Believe in value and ability of people to bring about positive change in themselves and others.

2. Peer Education programs were first developed to target youth in an effort to address youth sexual and reproductive rights according to the International Planned Parenthood Federation and to encourage positive student modeling and mentoring at high schools.

3. Success with youth has transcended to peer programs that target people of all ages and with a variety of personal problems, mental health issues, chronic diseases etc.



A peer is a person who belongs to the same social group as another person or group. The social group can be based on age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, occupation, health status, or other factors.

### *Basic Definition*

Peer education is the use of simple listening and problem solving skills in combination with learned knowledge and lived experience to assist people who are your peers.

### *Basic Principle*

People are capable of solving their own problems if given a chance.

### *Basic Philosophy*

Most of the time, people are served best by a relationship with support their own empowerment and decision making.

### *Goal of peer educators*

To help peers find their own solutions to their own problems; not to solve their problems for them.

### *Your Tools*

Tools to use are active listening skills, problem solving skills and your own experience with personal and cultural issues

### *From where we stand*

*What is your role and the goal of contact with teens?*

It is very important to realize and keep in mind what your position is - what the goal of the project is and what your limits are in contact with teens.

→ You are neither a non-stop crisis line provider, nor are you a professional consultant or psychotherapist. Therefore you CANNOT analyze the situation deeply, maintain long-term contact, save the person completely or help them with their problems.

→ HOWEVER you can SUPPORT teens by: letting them know that they are not alone in their situation, listening to them, letting them know that the way





they feel is OK and helping them to identify what's going on and who should they contact to receive professional help.

The advantage of facebook groups and instagram is that they are very accessible - they are a natural way of communication present in the everyday life of teens. Also they are geographically and time accessible. So you might even be the first one, who is contacted by teens in trouble, you might be the first who hears about their problems - this contact is important and it's crucial to provide them with support and information about where they should seek professional help.

**The main goals of contact are to:**

- validate emotions
- make teens feel welcome, understood, safe
- support good choices - contact professional help, practice safe self-care  
reduce feelings of guilt
- provide them with professional help contacts

→ When you are providing teens with professional help contacts, make sure that you provide them with contacts to organizations which you know, which are providing professional services and which are relevant to their situation. You should have a list of these organizations already prepared.

## Relationship PE/Coordinator

*what is crisis and crisis intervention?*

→ But again - you are not a crisis intervention provider, you are not a therapist, you are not a professional and the particular contact in the project does not provide you with space to do crisis intervention. A crisis is a psychological reaction to an extremely difficult life situation, with which a person is not able to cope on their own or with help from their loved ones.

In crisis, all standard coping mechanisms don't work and don't help. A crisis is very subjective - what is difficult or endangering is perceived very differently. Crisis might be a potential to change and to learn new positive coping mechanisms. If the crisis is recognized and worked through, it might promote personal growth. On the other hand, if it is not recognized, the crisis might be dangerous.

Crisis intervention is a method of work with a client in a situation they experience as stressful or threatening. It focuses mainly on the current situation, the



current emotions and feelings; it does not usually focus on the past or future.

**The goal of crisis intervention is:**

- structure what the person is now experiencing
- stop endangering or risky behavior
- provide emotional support, support expressing emotions
- support feeling of safety
- support natural coping strategies
- break out of the tunnel vision situations

**Crisis intervention is NOT**

- persuading or providing a person with the “right” advice and quick solutions
- shutting down emotions
- belittling the symptoms of crisis (eating problems, sleeping problems...)
- taking responsibility for the situation and for the person in crisis



# We hear you

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**Our goal is to establish contact with teens, provide them with support, make them feel welcomed and understood and in some situations to provide them with professional help contacts.**

Try to be authentic - you can use the same words - if they say “mum”, “mother”, “her”, it all has different meanings. You can use same emoticons. Answer or react exactly to what was written, don't assume too much, you have only a little information.

Work with what's here and now - don't ask how it all started, focus on what's now.

You as the Ambassador might be important in letting the person know that: they are not alone in this

it is possible to receive help and they deserve it

-they deserve to feel better

- it is completely OK to feel whatever they feel

- what happened isn't their fault

-aawhat are the ways of helping - provide them with contacts to helpful organizations

Don't be afraid to name the situation as it is - if you think they are describing domestic violence, rape, sexual abuse, manipulation, etc. - name it. Sometimes victims of violence are not aware that the situation they are experiencing has its name or they don't realize that the behavior of their partner is abusive. By naming the situation you might help them realize it and realize the seriousness of it.

Practical examples:

**“I don't know what to do”** - uncertainty, shame, they don't know the practical information connected to their situation

-what you can say: “I can provide you with contacts to helpful organization which will help you find the solution” - show them support to open up, make them sure they can talk about anything, it's safe here

**I am very ... (sad, frustrated, afraid, ashamed ...)**” - writing about feelings, emotions



-What you can say: "You write that you are very sad, that's understandable after all you have gone through. Many people would feel the same after that." - let them know that what they feel is OK, they have the right to feel that, its normal and many other people do feel the same in such situations, they are not weirdos that they are feeling this.

**"I am afraid"** - fear

-what you can say: "It's OK to feel afraid and you shouldn't feel ashamed. if your life or your health is in danger call the police or crisis help line"

**"What can I do when ... happened to me?"** - clear request for information

-what you can say: "It's really great you want to find a solution / help / support. There are organizations which can provide you with information or support. You deserve help and you deserve to feel better"- support them and say it's great they ask about this, provide them with information/contacts

**"I don't understand why this had to happen to me ... I don't understand what mistake have I made"** - guilt, very often the victims feel that they should have done more, they should have fought more, protected themselves more, and nothing would have happened - your role here is to clearly let them know it wasn't their fault and so to remove this guilt from their shoulders

-what you can say: "I want to let you know, that rape is not your fault at all. Always the one responsible is the perpetrator"

"You were a kid and he was an adult, so he was the responsible one. Adults are always responsible for children and it's their role to protect them. it is not your fault"

**"I don't deserve this (help, your attention)" ... "sorry for complaining" ... "I shouldn't complain here"** victims or survivors very often have low self-confidence, your role here is to let them know that they deserve help and they

deserve a life without violence

-what you can say: "You deserve help, no one deserves to be abused and treated with disrespect" ... "You deserve a life without violence" ... "Your boyfriend has no right to treat you like this, to do ...."

**Suicide, suicidal thoughts, self-harm**

if there is someone talking about suicide or self-harm **it's very serious - do not analyze the situation, just let them know you understand them and provide them with contacts to a crisis help line.** Do not try to help them



**provide them with contacts to a crisis help line.** Do not try to help them by talking about it - you are not a professional and this is a very difficult topic to cope with.

**although you might not agree with suicidal thoughts - this is not a place to patronize**

-you can write: "It's understandable that you are thinking about suicide, after everything you experienced"... "Thank you for your honesty and sharing this with us. Suicidal thoughts might appear when you are dealing with such difficult issues. Contact crisis-help 111 222, its anonymous and you can talk about your thoughts and feelings with professionals"

### It will be OK soon

*what not to say and what to say instead*

**You made it all up. It is all just in your head. You're just an attention seeker. Stop being so dramatic** - by this you are saying you don't believe them

-what you can say instead: "thank you for your honesty" ... "it must have been difficult to write all this" ... "thank you for your trust" ... "it seems that it is really hard for you right now"

**Stop complaining all the time. You need to stop feeling sorry for yourself** - this is a safe space to complain and to feel sorry, maybe it's the very first time they have talked about it, maybe other people told them not to complain and now they feel misunderstood

-what to say instead: "you deserve help" ... "you deserve to feel better" ... "you deserve to be safe"... "there are ways to solve your situation, you can contact this NGO, they provide professional help and they will help you to find the solution

**No one said life was fair. Things could be so much worse. At least you have, .. At least you are alive....** - this means that we are not listening to them and makes them feel they don't deserve help, that their pain or their emotions aren't OK

-what to say instead: "it's normal to feel this" ... "many people in this situation would feel the same" ... "it's completely understandable that you feel ..., after all you went through"

**You don't have to be scared** – to be afraid is OK, we all feel scared sometimes. Even if the reason for fear doesn't need to be logical for us, it's real for them. Plus they can be in real danger



-what to say instead: "it's Ok that you feel scared now, you don't have to feel ashamed about that, if your life or your health is in danger the call police or a crisis helpline"

**It will be OK soon, you will feel better soon** - how can we know? This might be a false promise, we don't know how the situation will develop and maybe it just won't be OK

-what to say instead: "you deserve help" ... "you deserve to feel better"

**You have to tell me what happened** - forcing a person to talk about a traumatic experience is secondary victimization. Usually you don't need to know exactly what happened and if yes, you can ask differently

-what to say instead: "is it OK for you to tell me what are you dealing with so I know what NGO contact I should send you? If you don't want to, it's completely OK, it's just up to you, and I can also send you this general list of helping organizations..."

**Family/health/anything else is the most precious thing we have** - this is a patronizing, plus we don't know how it is for the person, maybe they feel something else is more precious, maybe they are currently dealing with something else concerning family or health and we might make them feel bad about it

-what to say instead: "it is good that you have this close relationship with your mum and so you can tell her everything"

if they are dealing with suicidal thoughts or self-harm - see the paragraph above mentioning these

**You should just try harder, you need to get out more, just think positively, you're not pushing yourself enough** - this means we don't believe they are doing their best. Your goal is to support them and make them feel welcome, not to criticize them

-what to say instead: "you did all you could in that situation" ... "I see you are trying everything to solve the situation" ... "I really appreciate that you are looking for help, there are organizations which can help you and you deserve it"

**Why haven't you said it sooner, why did you go there alone? It's all your fault** - this is blaming, victim blaming. It is very difficult to talk about topics like this, so we have to always be supportive when people talk about it

-what to say instead: "thank you for your honesty, it must have been difficult to write this all" ... "you are very brave"



**We are not talking about it here** - this makes them feel unwelcome, misunderstood

-what to say instead: “it's a serious problem and thank you for sharing it, but you should consult with professionals - let me give you some relevant contacts...”



# *Don't feed the troll*

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## *how to react to trolls and haters*

**Set clear rules and follow them.** The rules are there for you as well - follow them even if someone makes you feel angry.

**Try to discern between those who don't agree with you but some discussion is still possible with them and those who will do anything to make you angry – those are trolls.**

**How to identify a troll:** usually they are anonymous (their profile picture is either an avatar or fake profile, they have few friends and none personal info or content), their goal is to make you angry (they are not polite, they attack you personally, they don't add anything meaningful to the conversation, they would write anything provocative enough just to get some attention and a reaction from you).

**Don't feed trolls.** If you feel that someone is a troll, don't react to them and consult your mentor about this. If you have to respond - don't get involved in the argument; limit it to pointing out that the posting may be considered as troll, for the benefit of other list members.

**Try to stay positive.**

**Practice self-care.** Read the last chapter in this handbook.

# *Respect choices*

## *ethics and principles*

**We are here to help.** So every time you should keep in mind the question - is this helping this particular person? The main premise is the goal of the project - we are here to spread awareness, promote healthy relationships and discussion about them and prevent relationship violence amongst teens. And of course - there is no place for hate and xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, racism, and other discrimination based on gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, political opinion, religion, etc.

**Respect choices.** All of us have some opinions, values and beliefs, and we might not always agree with others. You may not agree with all decisions teens make, but you are here to support them, not judge them. As





ambassador, your role is to support discussion and support teens experiencing difficulties in relationships. It is OK to give your own opinion, but in a respectful and supportive way.

**Confidentiality.** Discussion about anything related to relationships is likely to be very intimate. Keep all that private. Do not contact people involved in the discussion privately. Set as many rules as possible to protect the privacy of teens involved in discussion. It might even promote further discussion, because teens may feel ashamed or awkward to talk about some topics openly.



# Summary

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## *Tips for working in a social media group*

### General

- We want to engage people in discussion
- We want to share interesting and informative content
- We want to encourage people to share their stories - what tools we can use for that?

### Somebody seeking help

- Accept and confirm that violence is never ok and nobody has a right to harm physically, emotionally or in any other way
- Clearly state that abusive relationship is not ok and nobody deserves that
- Appreciate sharing and speaking out
- Is there anybody else the person can talk to? (Parent, friend, teacher...)
- Support seeking professional help if needed
- Encourage to come again
- Do not be an expert, use a common language
- Do not judge a person for his or her decisions
- Be careful with giving advice, good advice can be misunderstood
- Remember, you know a little bit of the story, you never know the whole context.
- Believe, emotions and personal view can be various and it is not lying.

### Hate speech

- Take your time! There is no need to react immediately. If some content touches you very personally, ask a colleague to react. Never react when you feel very emotional.



- When offensive or rude behavior occurs, refer to the rules of the group discussion
- Don't be personal, react on the content, not on the person
- Be aware, that some posts are meant to provoke you
- Be positive, if possible, appreciate sharing of opinion. It is ok to disagree. Be clear and strong in values at the same time.
- If the post violates the rules seriously, consider deleting it after warning. First consult with your colleagues. When deleting, always explain (XY's comment was deleted because it was rude/offensive/discriminatory/etc. We appreciate different opinions, but we need to ask all the members to respect each other and respect the rules of the group).
- When hoax or bias occurs, stick to the data or resources.
- Don't take hate speech as a personal attack.

### Practical exercise:

Try to simulate this conversations online. How would you answer? Discuss with the other youth ambassadors and try different options. Only after that check the proposed answer and discuss about all the versions.

Seeking help/advice:

1. Nora : Hello, could you help me? My boyfriend calls me stupid all the time, I don't like it, but I love him

and I don't want to leave him. I don't know what to do.

Love & Respect: Hello Nora, thank you for sharing with us! Such situations are always difficult.

Everybody deserves to be treated with respect, it is not ok that he calls you stupid. Have you tried to talk to him? I think it might be also helpful to share with somebody you can trust, maybe some of your friends or family?

Maybe others here in group can write you what they would do. If there is



no help, you can

check the list of helping organizations on our webpage. Fingers crossed!  
Jitka from L&R

2. Alice : My boyfriend is frequently violent to me? What should I do?

Love & Respect: Hello Alice, I am glad you wrote us! I can imagine it is a very difficult situation for you. I would like to support you, nobody is allowed to be violent to you, you deserve to be treated with respect. Your safety is very important. I don't know what exactly is happening, but if you don't feel safe, try to avoid being alone with your partner and contact an organization, which can help or talk to a friend or family. You can find a list of the on our webpage. Maybe somebody else here has a similar experience and can support you. Jitka from L&R

3. Frank : Is making fun of somebody wrong or ok in relationship?

Love & Respect : It is difficult to answer, in some cases it is very ok and in some cases not. I wonder

what others think... Jitka from L&R

- Hate speech

4. Tobias : What kind of shitty project is this? Are you seriously telling people what to do?

Love & Respect : Hello Tobias. The aim of this project is preventing teen dating violence. We do not tell people what to do, just inform about healthy relationships, because we think that nobody deserves violence. If you have more questions about a project, feel free to write us personal msg. Jitka from L&R

5. Bob : Stupid feminists, you are all ugly and dull.

Love & Respect: Dear Bob, it is ok to disagree but please follow the group discussion rules. Jitka from L&R

6. Matt : Dear Lela from L&R go fuck yourself!

Love & respect : Matt, if you continue being offensive, your comments will be deleted.

In the following table you can find some more model questions/problems which teenagers can post in a group



and some reactions, which might be helpful. Please keep in mind that every situation is different so

there is no universal advice. However, some reactions are usually helping in every situation, such as:

- Thank you for sharing, I am glad you spoke out
- It is not your fault!
- Your body belongs to you.
- You have a right to say no!
- Mutual respect is a base of healthy relationship, you deserve that.
- You are not alone.
- There is a professional help you can contact

Question	Tips
I don't like the way he/she is talking to me	Be aware, is not good to suppress your feelings, try to talk to your partner about it, talk to the friend/-family, if you do not feel safe, avoid contact and seek help.
Partner is verbally aggressive	It is never ok, nobody is allowed to do this to you, this can be very difficult, you are not alone, talk to the friend/family, if you don't feel safe or if he/she is threatening you seek help asap.
My friends/family advise me to break up	Talk to them and try to find out why, maybe they are worried for some reason?
I wish my partner to be more supportive	Sometimes is tough when you do not feel supported. You can try talking to your partner about it and you will see how his reaction.
Partner acts differently when with friends	Some teenagers do this and it is usually because of their uncertainty, it can help to talk about it, but sometimes it is very difficult.



Question	Tips
I feel pushed to sexual activity	Nobody has the right to push you to sexual activity, your body belongs to you only and you make decisions about it. You can say no and insist on it and your partner has to respect it. If he/she keeps
Partner is physically violent to me	Constant control is a way of violence and it is not ok. It can be also very stressful and frustrating. Respect your feelings and ask to stop. If this is not helping, there are ways to unblock the contact. Talk to friend/family or seek professional help if you feel you need more support.
I fear partners reaction	If you are afraid to talk to your partner because you fear his/her reaction, consider other ways of communication, having somebody to support you or stop seeing the person. Fear is not a part of healthy relationship.
Partner threatens me	If your partner is threatening you, do not underestimate the threats. Share with somebody else, friend/family/teachers/local authorities. This can be very difficult, but put your safety first.
I experienced sexual assault	I am glad you are speaking out. Nobody has a right to hurt you in this way, your body belongs to you. Follow you need in this situation, listen to your feelings. You are not alone, you can seek medical attention, legal support, professional help (anonymously, if possible in your country). Remember, it is not your fault!
Sexting	Unwanted online or mobile sexting is a way of violence. You can ask to stop, if it not works, feel free to turn off your phone or block a person. Do not answer unwanted msg. Seek help, you can save the msg to prove the virtual abuse. Remember, it is not your fault. You have a right to stop it (even if you engaged in such an activity before).



# You first

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## *self-care and psychological hygiene*

Being there for others might be very demanding. You as Ambassador also deserve self-care and rest. When dealing with especially difficult topics, it is also necessary to let it all go and debrief with someone else.

There are some tips that you can follow to ensure you have all your energy needed (emotional, psychological and also physical):

**Set the boundaries and the rules.** Make sure you have a clear plan of your activities with your mentor, and you know what your responsibility is and what is already up to someone else

**Stick to your schedule.** This also includes the time - is it your due day to reply to this message? If not, don't reply

**Don't forget your role.** You are a peer consultant, you are neither a therapist, nor a social worker, you cannot save the person completely, your role is to support them and make them feel welcome, understood and safe in the group/instagram.

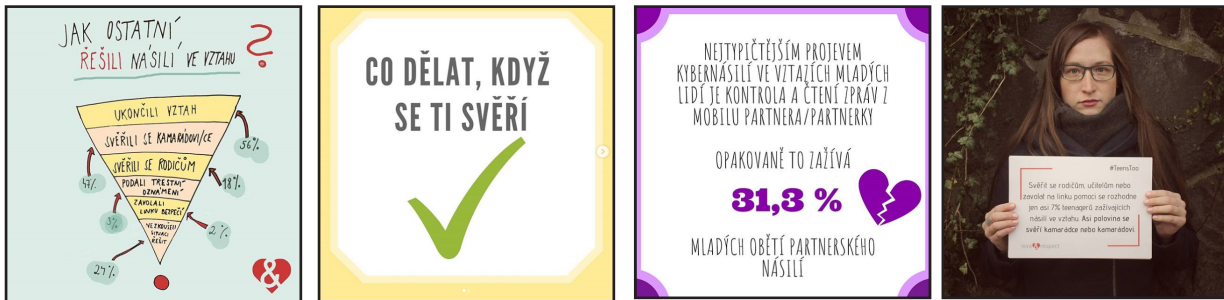
**If dealing with a difficult topic.** It's OK to ask for help, contact your mentor. Also take your time to debrief - talk about it with your mentor, do some self-care practice - do what helps you to relax (music, walk, exercise, food, meditation,...) if you are in doubt about what to answer, if you don't feel safe, if the conversation/question is connected to your direct experience - contact your mentor and talk about it.

**YOU FIRST.** You have to feel safe and feel OK to be able to help/support someone else

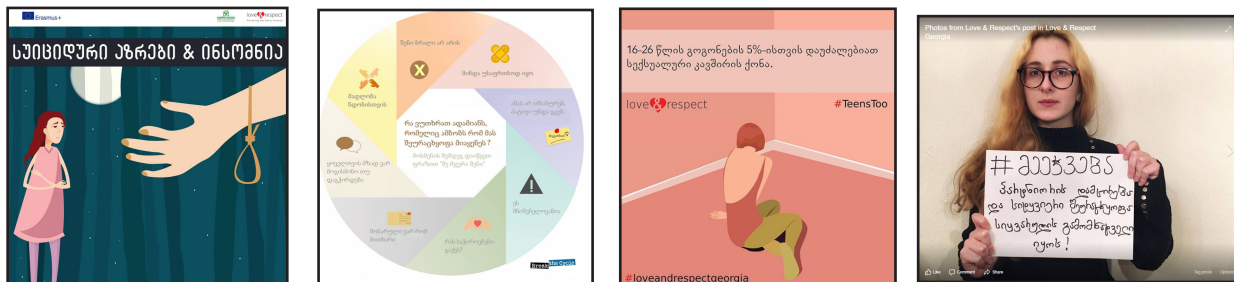


# Examples of content created by the Ambassadors of Love & Respect

## CZ



## GEO



## Armenia





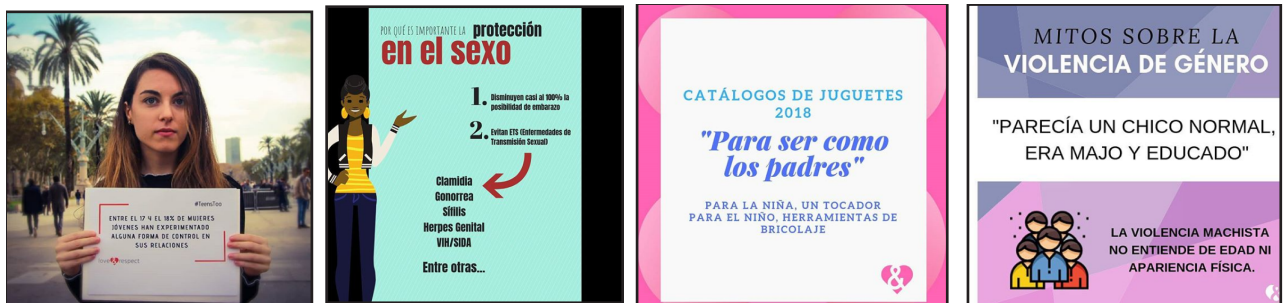
# Austria



# Italy



# Spain



## Resources

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