

S.T.A.R.
COMPOSITION

LOVE NOTES

**A NEWSLETTER FOR TEENS + YOUNG ADULTS ABOUT
LOVE, RELATIONSHIPS, AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN**

Published
by **WOMEN
AGAINST
ABUSE**



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Op-Ed: Breaking the Chains of Love

By Christian Hayden

As a community educator for Women Against Abuse, I get the honor and privilege of encouraging students to share and reflect on various aspects of intimate relationships. We discuss what relationships mean to them, how they navigate those relationships, as well as what they value in relationships. I enjoy this work because I get the chance to affect such a vitally important part of their lives.

Violence is prevalent in our communities, and I am not just talking about gun violence. I am talking about economic, emotional, and sexual violence. With this in mind, it makes sense that we ask ourselves: "how can I open myself up and be vulnerable with another person if I am concerned about the violence I have seen or experienced from my relationships with others?" This dynamic is not unique to adults in relationships. It is also relevant and present in the relationships our youth are experiencing.

Adults and youth both learn how to hurt each other more than they learn how to heal each other. It is usually easier for students to think of ways people abuse their partners than the ways that they positively interact with them. I believe that many of the ways we learn to interact with each other prioritizes our own individual wellbeing and needs over the wellbeing and needs of others. This greatly influences how our relationships form and function.

Another aspect that ties in with this dialogue is society's portrayal of

sex. Our society sends mixed messages about sex - obsessed with it on one hand, but then refuses to discuss it deeply on the other. This reality dilutes our ability to experience the journey toward true intimacy and appreciate the work that needs to go into it. It also prevents us from realizing and acknowledging the gifts that come with true intimacy.

I often hear statements from students such as "love, what is that?" or "love is fake." Thich Nhat Hanh says "You must love in such a way that the person you love feels free." Some of our students experience oppression daily, and safe spaces are not the norm. It will take more energy and effort for us to unlearn these things that make love feel like a prison. A greater and more liberating love becomes possible when we allow ourselves the courage to confront those other chains. When we start to heal each other more than hurt each other, and when we focus on the wellbeing of others, we will then begin to tap into that more liberating love.

About Love Notes

Love Notes is a newsletter created by the Educators of Women Against Abuse's **Students Talking About Relationships (S.T.A.R.)** program to provide information about healthy, safe relationships to teens and young adults in and around the City of Philadelphia.

If you are in a violent relationship and need help in Philadelphia, contact the **Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline** at 1-866-723-3014. Counselors are available 24/7, and all calls are confidential.



All illustrations created by Kelsey Stewart

THE 11 WARNING SIGNS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

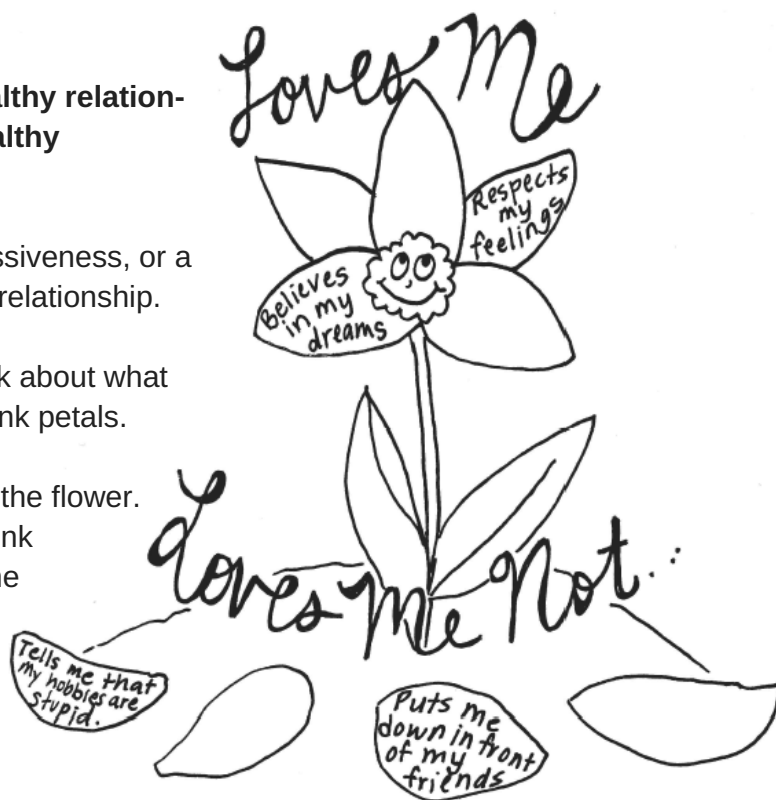
by Kelsey Stewart

There are some behaviors that take place in healthy relationships and some behaviors that happen in unhealthy relationships.

Certain behaviors, like an explosive temper, possessiveness, or a history of violence are warning signs of an abusive relationship.

Look at the “love me” petals still on the flower. Think about what other traits you’d want in a partner and fill in the blank petals.

Look at the “love me not” petals that have fallen off the flower. These are traits we would not want in a partner. Think about your own relationship boundaries and fill in the blank fallen petals with traits or behaviors you do not want in a partner or relationship.



Know the Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship

- Extreme jealousy
- Constant put-downs
- Explosive temper
- Financial control
- Threats
- Possessiveness
- Telling you what to do
- Isolation
- Making false accusations
- History of violence

Fun and Games

S W F E D E E A N L L D E N S
E U R L S N V T E O T O F E D
M E G P A E A L A N V S A E K
F A O A E H I B O M G I V U I
D S I N R O R I S I L O A Q N
A N U N R M N E R U L U B R G
E E A L S A U L T E H E O A T
I I O H P Q F F B T N B Y S B
Y S D M T R U O F H E A F I A
P E O R I H S E O I N B R L E
Q C F E O K G N E B N O I I O
S H N I H E H I W Z A B E A U
V D T J W A D H R Z E W N D R
P A R T N E R I D W F N D P W
L O V E R I B S R O I V O N Q

Find the words below in the puzzle to uncover a secret message. After finding all the words, use the letters that are left to fill in the blanks and see the message.

BABE
BAE
BEAU
BELOVED
BETTERHALF
BOO
BOYFRIEND

COMPANION
ESPOSA
GIRLFRIEND
HUSBAND
KING
LOVER
MAINSQUEEZE
NOVIA

NOVIO
PARTNER
QUEEN
RIDEORDIE
RIGHTHAND
SOULMATE
SUGARMUFFIN
WIFEY

No matter what you call your significant other...

Send a love note of your own!

