

Stopping Violence Against Women

Bring Men into the Conversation

PUBLIC EDUCATION EFFORTS to raise awareness about domestic violence are most often addressed to women. They've had an impact. Polls show that women's understanding of the problem and its causes, as well as the hope for getting help, have grown significantly over the past decade.

Men have generally been left out of the conversation. Yet polls indicate that men know domestic violence is wrong and are willing to talk to young people about it. A new public service ad campaign called "Teach Early" is inviting them to do just that.

Sponsored by the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) and the Ad Council, the campaign calls on dads, coaches, teachers, uncles, brothers, and mentors to talk to boys about violence against women. The idea is to do it early, before the boys have internalized pop-culture messages that are so tolerant of violence.

Picture this scenario from a 30-second TV spot (see right):

A coach takes a group of boys to a coffee shop for a bite to eat. In a nearby booth, a couple starts arguing. The man's voice rises. He threatens his companion, violently grabs her arm, and drags her from the booth. As the argument grows, the camera inter-

weaves close-up footage of three faces: the coach, at first curious, then embarrassed; the increasingly distressed woman; and one of the young boys, clearly disturbed by the fight.

"When do you get involved?" the ad asks in print across the screen as the camera shifts from person to person. "Now? . . . Now?" At the end of the spot, a tag line appears: "The best time to get involved is now.

Teach boys that violence against women is wrong. Teach Early. Call 1-800-End-Abuse."

Funded by the Waitt Family Foundation, the ads appear in print, radio, and television versions. Two spots feature country singer Andy Griggs and Rudy Rush, host of "It's Showtime at the Apollo." A print ad focuses on boys in baseball uniforms with the line: "What they learn as boys, they do as men. That's why we need to teach our sons and other boys in our lives that violence against women is wrong. Now, when they need to hear it most."

To zero in on a group that can make a significant difference, the Family Violence Prevention Fund has begun working with the National High School Athletic Coaches Association. Fund president Esta Soler intends to bring the discussion of domestic violence directly to coaches and give them the tools to talk to boys.

Boys need to know that "abuse doesn't make you a man," said Soler. Through the "Teach Early" campaign, men can help boys grow up with a healthy picture of what it takes to be an adult.

—Joanne Edgar



ACTION ALERT

For more information on the Teach Early campaign, visit the FVPF website, www.endabuse.org.

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