On March 14 of this year, a young girl’s prank had unimaginable consequences. Tysen Benz, 11, hanged himself after reading messages on Snapchat saying his 13-year-old girlfriend had died. Except, she hadn’t. It was all made up by the young girl; she was sending the messages from a friend’s account. After reading the news of his girlfriend’s “death,” Benz posted on social media he was going to kill himself. None of the people who read his post, none of the people who knew his girlfriend was pranking him, tried to stop him. Benz died in the hospital on April 4.

On June 16, Michelle Carter was found guilty of manslaughter in a highly publicized case in which prosecutors argued she was responsible for her boyfriend’s death after she instructed him to follow through on his plan to commit suicide. At the time of Conrad Roy III’s death in 2014, he was 18 and Carter was 17.

“You can’t think about it. You just have to do it. You said you were gonna do it. Like I don’t get why you aren’t,” Carter allegedly told Roy via text. Roy killed himself in his truck with carbon monoxide.

These shocking incidents of teens using technology to harass and terrify their dating partners are extreme but point to an important message: Dating abuse has gone online. According to a study from the Urban Institute Project, 25 percent of dating teens have been victimized by their partners through technology. Of those, more than half of the victims said they were also physically abused.

Other key findings from the report:

- Just 9 percent of teens of digital abuse sought help, and it was rarely from their parents or teachers.
- A third of those who experienced digital abuse also experienced sexual coercion from their partner.
- Much higher incidences of digital abuse from a dating partner were reported among LGBTQ youth compared to heterosexual teens.

Adults Are Doing It, Too

It’s not surprising to Cameka Crawford, chief communications officer at The National Domestic Violence Hotline, to hear that teen abusers are increasingly using technology to harass their partners, considering the same is true among adult abusers.

“It’s about one person trying to have power and control over their partner,” Crawford says. “So, yes, some of the behaviors we see in adult relationships, we see in youngsters as well.”
 Dating Despite Rape Culture
January 3, 2018 | By domesticshelters.org

Single women: How many times has this happened to you? You meet someone, you exchange numbers, you text about a date on Saturday night. Your date offers to pick you up from your house or apartment and you immediately feel uncomfortable. You don’t want him to know where you live until you get to know him better, so you suggest meeting him at a coffee shop instead. He suggests a bar. But, you’re not sure if you want to add alcohol to the date either without knowing him. So you suggest the coffee shop again.

Things feel awkward, but you’re reluctant to explain yourself. You don’t know how to tell this stranger that dating is a risk-assessment for you. All of your decisions are based on the knowledge that, should things go awry, should he turn out to be a creeper, an abuser or an assaulter, your decisions prior will be called into question.

That’s exactly what artist RH wanted to convey in their comic strip, “Risky Date,” posted on their site Robot Hugs. In it, they say, “We are expected to constantly and correctly take actions to reduce the likelihood that we may be harmed by others and reduce the severity of the harm we endure.”

The strip came out in 2014, but three years later, it’s just as relevant as incidents of victim blaming run rampant. In July, the security director of a New York community college resigned after he was caught on tape blaming victims for their own sexual assaults. Fran Giles accused one of the victims of “seeing a meal ticket” by reporting her assault because she walked and didn’t run from her perpetrator. The school’s president, James P. Klyczek, also made disparaging comments back in April, asking of the victim, “What, is she stupid?” for giving her assailant a tour of the campus saying, “That’s as dumb as can be.” He resigned shortly after.

The Judgment Behind Rape Culture

“There’s an undue responsibility on women to protect [themselves] from sexual assault. We don’t do that for many other crimes. When we’re questioning the victims, it detracts from the crime,” says Tasha Menaker, director of sexual violence response initiatives for the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. Her job is to train those who respond to sexual assault—like law enforcement and domestic violence advocates—how to do so with the right know-how, sensitivity and understanding.

She says one of the biggest hurdles in her way is convincing

(Continued on page 7)
When it comes to technology, controlling behaviors include:
- Using social media to monitor a partner’s whereabouts or track friendships
- Constant texting
- Coercing a partner into sending explicit selfies
- Coercing a partner for sex
- Sending degrading or threatening messages
- Demanding passwords to email and social media accounts
- Tampering with a partner’s social media account without their permission

Start Talking About This Early
Crawford says that stopping the cycle means parents and educators need to take the lead. Start by talking to kids about healthy relationships at a young age—and she means young.

“I believe we should start talking about healthy relationships in preschool with 3- and 4-year-olds,” she says. “There are opportunities very early on to teach things like ‘We don’t put our hands on other people’ and ‘If someone says stop, we stop.’”

The conversations should continue and should start including information on dating relationships around 10 or 11. “Before a young person starts dating, start talking to them about healthy dating relationships and healthy conflict resolution,” Crawford says.

What to Do
If you suspect your teen is being abused by a romantic partner, resist the urge to swoop in and save the day.

“If you say, ‘I forbid you to see this person,’ how well do you think that’s going to go?” she says. “Also, as parents, we have to think about what dating violence goes back to. It’s about power and control. If your teen is in an abusive relationship, we shouldn’t also be stripping power and control away from them. We should be working to shift power back to them.”

Here are some things you can do, according to loveisrespect.org:

Listen. Be available for your teen to talk to and offer support. Tell him or her no one deserves to be abused and that the abuse is of no fault of their own.

Be non-judgmental. Never accuse your teen of acting in a way that instigates abuse. Also, don’t make your teen feel bad for continuing to love the person abusing them.

Believe your teen. Survivors of dating violence are often reluctant to tell someone what’s going on for fear of not being believed. Don’t dismiss abuse as teen drama or angst.

Suggest peer counseling. Sometimes teens feel more comfortable talking to other teens. Loveisrespect.org has teen advocates that can listen and offer advice. Reach them at 866-331-9474, online or by texting “loveis” to 22522.

Decide on next steps together. Rather than mandating your teen stop seeing an abusive partner, discuss how he or she plans to move forward. Be available to assist with safety planning but let your teen take the lead on when and how to end the relationship.

If you need more advice on how to help a youngster who’s being abused or if you want help starting the conversation about healthy relationships, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline or visit loveisrespect.org.
SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition Honors Outstanding Volunteers

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition’s staff and clients have all been touched in a unique way by the spirit of our volunteers. It was therefore appropriate to recognize those whose service in 2017 were deemed to be exceptional at our Annual Volunteer Banquet held on March 29, 2018.

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR - Stacy Parker
This award recognizes the superior achievement, commitment and support of a volunteer to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR - Steve Ferguson
This award recognizes outstanding leadership and service to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by a member of SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition’s Board of Directors.

CORPORATE SERVICE AWARD - Brusters
This award is presented to a local company in recognition of outstanding corporate support and service to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD OF THE YEAR - The Shop
This award is presented to individuals and organizations that have exemplified outstanding community service to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

STUDENT VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR - Rachel Ann Gresko
This award is presented to outstanding student volunteers in recognition of superior achievement, commitment and support to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

ANN KEARSE AWARD - Natisha Adams
Ann Kearse was the kind of volunteer every group wishes they had. Her death in 1998 was a huge loss for us. In honor of her volunteer service, an award was created and is given to the volunteer that epitomizes that ongoing volunteer spirit and commitment in large and small ways.

DEDICATION AWARDS - Bobby Jackson, Betty Koester, Operation Drains of the Upstate, Inc.
These volunteers have been truly dedicated in their long-term and consistent commitment to SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition and the victims we serve.

HELPING HANDS AWARDS - Celanese, Little Caesars, Ruby Mae’s Attic
This award is presented to organizations in recognition of exemplary service and dedication to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

SHINING STAR AWARDS - Claudia Anderson, CATO, Mattress Connection
This award is presented to individuals and organizations in recognition of stellar support, and commitment to promoting awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault.

ANGELS OF LIGHT AWARD - Arrowwood Baptist Church
This award is presented to faith-based groups in recognition of their dedication and ongoing commitment to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

KELLEY AWARD - SPARTA
Donna Kelley was a much loved friend and staff member. Her death in November of 2002 was an incredible loss for us and the victims she served. In honor of her unparalleled commitment to underserved victim populations, an award was created and given to the volunteer that exemplifies that enthusiasm and dedication to empowering those who would otherwise have no support or guidance.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS - Country Café, Amy Fowler, Amanda Miller, Jimmy and Kathy Tindal, TSK Fire & Safety, Una Fire Department
This award is presented to individuals and organizations in recognition of their outstanding service to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in this community.
Save the date!!!

Auction For A Cause
The Magic of Giving

Silent & Live Auctions
November 3, 2018
Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium
5:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Signature Sponsor:

J M Smith Corporation

We have vacations, art work, gift certificates, a cruise, adventures and many more treasures to sell. Tickets are $15.00 (adults & children) in advance from each agency or $20.00 at the door. A 10% buyer’s premium will be added to all purchases.

auction4acause.net

Therapy Team Wish List:

Shelter Wish List:

Sexual Assault Closet Wish List:
Children’s Lightweight Leggings/Drawstring Type Pants, New Women’s & Men’s Underwear (All Sizes), Rubbermaid/Sterilite Clear Containers w/Lids, Socks (All Sizes), White Butcher Block Paper, Women’s & Men’s Lightweight Drawstring Type Pants (S-XXL), Sensory Therapy Toys (Fidgets, Stress Balls, Related Items)

With your continued support, we can help so many...

___ $95 to provide shelter for one night ___ $475 to provide shelter for five nights
___ $190 to provide shelter for two nights ___ $665 to provide shelter for seven nights
___ I wish to make a gift of my own choosing __________
___ I would like my gift to be made in honor/memory of:
   In honor of _________________________________
   In memory of _______________________________
___ I would like more information about volunteer opportunities

Name ______________________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________________
City ____________________________________ State ____________ Zip __________
Phone ( ______ ) _____________________Email ______________________________

Please make checks payable to SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition
Mail to: 236 Union Street, Spartanburg, SC  29302

Donations are tax deductible according to the tax regulations regarding 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organizations.
Thank You to our 2017 Contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advance America</th>
<th>GRC Wireless, Inc.</th>
<th>Leslie Rodgers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet Agnew</td>
<td>Andrew Green</td>
<td>Elizabeth Rogers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy J. Allen</td>
<td>Laurel Greene</td>
<td>Dr. Juliette Saad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon Smiles Foundation</td>
<td>GroundZero</td>
<td>Iona Sanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous Anonymous</td>
<td>Edwin and Catherine Haskell III</td>
<td>Kenneth and Janie Scruggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcadia United Methodist Women</td>
<td>Joyce Hawkins</td>
<td>James and Shirley Seegars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley and Paula Baker</td>
<td>Michael Hawkins</td>
<td>SimplexGrinnell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Baker</td>
<td>Sheila Haynes</td>
<td>Maria Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deanna Banister</td>
<td>Haysen Flexible Systems</td>
<td>Nick Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom and Joan Barnet</td>
<td>Helms and Company, Inc.</td>
<td>Gary R. Smiley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David M. and Cynthia C. Beacham</td>
<td>Jeremy Henkel</td>
<td>Louis J. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie S. Bebko</td>
<td>Elizabeth Hill</td>
<td>Deborah Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Beeks</td>
<td>Ann Hoover</td>
<td>Spartanburg Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen Bell</td>
<td>Leslie Howard</td>
<td>Association—Retired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathyn and Charles Bennett</td>
<td>Kenneth and Ann Hukabyy</td>
<td>Spartanburg Little Theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethel United Methodist Church</td>
<td>Inman United Methodist Church</td>
<td>Spartanburg Regional Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Bittner</td>
<td>JM Smith Corporation</td>
<td>Spartanburg Ski Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy S. Bobo</td>
<td>Antonio Johnson</td>
<td>Spartanburg Women in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Bolton</td>
<td>Bill Joslin</td>
<td>Medicine Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doris Boozer</td>
<td>Spencer Justice</td>
<td>St Luke United Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna Borresen</td>
<td>Bilikis Kapasi</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Wiley Bourne</td>
<td>Paul and Karen Kersch</td>
<td>St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya Brannon</td>
<td>Fred and Pamela Klapper</td>
<td>Sherry Stevens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Brigantine</td>
<td>Knights of Columbus</td>
<td>Sunshine Club-Greenville ODAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Brooks</td>
<td>Wesely Koch</td>
<td>Sharon S. Suydam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy Burrell</td>
<td>Wayne and Betty Koester</td>
<td>Switzer Family Foundation Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Burrell</td>
<td>Samuel and Elaine Laird</td>
<td>Synnex Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand and Judy Bynum</td>
<td>Fronneau J. Wood Little</td>
<td>Sarah and W. Rieppe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds Church</td>
<td>Pamela Little</td>
<td>Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church United Women</td>
<td>Caroline Little</td>
<td>Gordon Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic Home Mortgage, Inc.</td>
<td>Gilbert E. and Betty B. Londeen</td>
<td>TelecomPioneers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Coggins</td>
<td>Lyman Untied Methodist Women</td>
<td>SC Chapter #61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converse College (Customer)</td>
<td>Frederick and Mary Lylie</td>
<td>The Cato Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randall N. and Mary Lynn Conway</td>
<td>Patricia Manning</td>
<td>The Romans VIII Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda L. Cooper</td>
<td>Harold T. and Doreen B. Marshall</td>
<td>The Sky Phoenix Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Styke</td>
<td>Hannah Martin</td>
<td>Aaron and Kimberly Toler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John and Donna Cottingham</td>
<td>Karen Martin-Wilkins</td>
<td>United Methodist Women of Ben Avorl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan Crawford</td>
<td>Johnnie Shannon McCall</td>
<td>United Methodist Women of the Covenant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James and Nancy Crocker</td>
<td>Gary and Julie McCraw</td>
<td>Upstate Auto Auction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby Culbreth</td>
<td>Ray and Gayle McCraw</td>
<td>Frederick Van Patten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge N. De Silva</td>
<td>J. Edwin McDonnell</td>
<td>VCOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger Davis</td>
<td>Laura Lynn McLendon</td>
<td>Wall Verly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce H. Davis</td>
<td>Sarah and W. Rieppe Mehrtns</td>
<td>W.S. Badcock Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Renee DeAngelo</td>
<td>Miliken</td>
<td>Gail Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Diesing</td>
<td>Gail Millward</td>
<td>Julia Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Dill</td>
<td>Kathryn Milne</td>
<td>Wal-Mart Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathleen Dorsey</td>
<td>A. Kyle and Carmen C. Milner III</td>
<td>W.V. and G.B. Walukewicz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draxlmaier Group</td>
<td>Quincie Moore</td>
<td>John T. Wardlaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drs. Frick and Jones, PA</td>
<td>Kyla Moore</td>
<td>Scott Webster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur and Linda Dudycha</td>
<td></td>
<td>James Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John and Karin Elmore</td>
<td>Morgan Stanley Donor</td>
<td>Robert A. and Deborah J. White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopal Church of the Advent</td>
<td>Campaign</td>
<td>Amanda Wilkie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Estes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gail Willard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene Evans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Susan Woodham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frances Fager</td>
<td></td>
<td>Casey Wright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve Ferguson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Karin Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Fierova</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Baptist, Caring Sunday School Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Presbyterian Church, Spartanburg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Foster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twanda Foster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie Foster</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebekah Fredholm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship Baptist Church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ann A. Fruit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William P. and Charlotte G. Gee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gee Family Foundation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anita Giron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold and Novalene Gowdy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce and Angela Graham</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Gravermoen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael and Marisue Gray</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Grayson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition receives generous support from many people through United Way designated donations. Some of these donors did not wish to have their donations made public; therefore, may not be included on this list. We are appreciative of the support of our community and regret the omission of any contributor not listed in this report.
Please join SAFE Homes - Rape Crisis Coalition’s sexual assault awareness month campaign event, 1BlueStingHubCity, on April 19, 2018.

1BlueStingHubCity is a singer/songwriter competition, in which contestants submitted an original song via YouTube around our 2017 theme of EMBRACE YOUR VOICE. A panel of four judges scored each entry and then selected the top six finalists who will perform live in concert on April 19th. Your vote selects the winner!!

Our goal is to raise awareness about the 1 in 6 men who are survivors of an unwanted or abusive sexual experience.

Together we can become agents of change by EMBRACING OUR VOICE!

Partners In Prevention (PIP) is a collaboration among several Spartanburg community agencies in order to highlight prevention efforts for child abuse and sexual assault during the month of April.

This partnership, consisting of United Way of the Piedmont, Safe Homes - Rape Crisis Coalition, Hope Center for Children, and the Children’s Advocacy Center, seeks to raise a collective voice throughout the community to increase knowledge of available services and to engage Spartanburg in the continued efforts to eradicate all forms of abuse against children.

On April 9th, at 11:30 am at the Main Branch of the Spartanburg County Library, PIP will hold a lunch-n-learn discussion panel to raise awareness of the issues and to highlight each organization’s preventative efforts. Leaders from each organization will share current statistics and ways for community members to prevent child abuse and sexual assault.

2017 STATISTICS
SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition:

Assisted 2,565 adults and 1,273 children traumatized by domestic violence and sheltered 354 adults and children

- Assisted 315 direct and 141 indirect victims of sexual assault
- Provided 4,698 individual and 1,636 family therapy sessions for 624 people
- Provided 232 therapy/support groups which were attended by 259 individuals
- Accompanied 103 victims of sexual assault to the hospital
- Assisted 328 victims with filing order of protection petitions and attended 1,363 hearings with domestic violence and sexual assault victims
- We provided 633 education/prevention programs reaching 134,367 individuals
- 2,031 volunteers contributed 26,611 hours this year

We would like to say THANK YOU to The Uptown Sertoma Club of Spartanburg and all those who volunteered their time, talent, support, and donations to our organization.

Auction for A Cause netted SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition $17,282.46 for victims & survivors of domestic & sexual violence.
Emotional and psychological abuse can take many forms, including belittling, which can manifest as judging, humiliating, criticizing, trivializing or telling hurtful jokes. But belittling is no joking matter. It’s a tactic often used by abusers to make their victims feel small, unimportant or disrespected. It can take a toll on a survivor’s confidence and sense of self-esteem.

And, as with other forms of abuse, it’s a tool abusers use to exert control. The more down about yourself you feel, the more dependent you’ll be on your abuser to validate you—or, so they believe.

While belittling can be violent and hurtful, sometimes belittling can have innocent intentions, even if it’s still not kind, like a misguided attempt at a joke or a teasing that goes a little too far. How can you tell the difference between an intentionally insulting joke and one that might have just been foolish? By the way it makes you feel less than, and by the lack of a sincere apology when you express how hurtful the comment was. Sometimes, innocent jokes can be just that—said without ill will. But if a comment or action makes you feel bad, it’s your right to express your discomfort directly and to expect a genuine apology. Respectful partners should build each other up, not purposefully put each other down.

**What Belittling Sounds Like**

- Yelling or screaming at you to get a reaction.
- Insulting you—calling you fat, ugly or stupid—or criticizing your parenting skills or intelligence.
- Ignoring how you feel, disregarding your opinion or failing to recognize your contributions.
- Humiliating or embarrassing you, especially in front of family or friends.
- Making you the butt of jokes or offhand comments that disparage you and then saying something like, “I didn’t mean it. I’m just teasing,” or telling you that you’re being too sensitive.
- Bringing up past failures or mistakes as evidence of your incompetence or lack of intelligence.
- Forcing you to agree with them instead of forming or expressing your own opinion.
- Treating you as their property or as someone who has no value other than as a sex object.
- Denying the belittling, blaming it on you or criticizing you for making too big a deal out of it.
- Minimizing the seriousness of their abuse or accusing you of overreacting to their words or behaviors.
- Blaming you for their abusive behavior, but then turning around and telling you how much they love you.

You may be experiencing some or all of these factors and still wonder, “Is this abuse?” It’s a hard pill to swallow, believing that the person you love and trust can be purposefully trying to hurt you as a means of power and control. But ask yourself this: Are you afraid of your partner? Do you walk on eggshells whenever he or she is around? Is the belittling becoming a regular occurrence? Does your partner lack remorse for hurting you?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, you may need to face the reality that your partner is abusive. It can help to reach out to a trained domestic violence advocate and talk about your specific situation.

**How You Can React**

Abuse is not your fault. No one deserves to be demeaned or insulted. If you’re dealing with belittling behaviors, try these steps:

- Don’t retaliate or insult them back.
people there’s actually a problem. “We still have people who argue with us that rape culture is a myth and doesn’t actually exist. They don’t recognize that it’s those attitudes and behaviors that contribute to rape culture.”

Rape culture, at its simplest, is the act of normalizing sexual violence. Arguing that women’s clothing and behavior dictates whether or not she “deserved” to be assaulted contributes to a culture in which rape is seen as a “normal” consequence of such choices.

In RH’s comic, they write, “My need for an environment and context in meeting you that feels safer for me is ... based on my actual, lived experiences of evaluating risk and experiencing unsafe situations, and a constant awareness of a social support structure that will blame me for allowing myself to become the victim of a crime.”

Menaker says people have different reasons for wanting to refute the idea of a rape culture. They may have been socialized in a rape culture or brought up in a house where they were told it was not a reality. But it could also be a self-preservation tactic.

“To admit it’s going on means you’re at risk for sexual assault, and you have to recognize that if you come forward, you’ll be blamed and disbelieved.”

After a mistrial was called in the Bill Cosby sexual assault trial this past June, one of the jurors spoke out about accuser Andrea Constand’s testimony, implying that her choice of clothing and gift implied consent to sexual activity. “She was well-coached. Let’s face it, she went up to his house with a bare midriff and incense and bath salts. What the heck?” said the unnamed juror.

**Persistence Isn’t Always Sexy**

In terms of dating, the expectations for women often align with stereotypical gender roles. Women are still supposed to act and dress in a certain way, says Menaker. And men are supposed to be persistent.

“Persistence on behalf of the man is something to be valued. There’s this idea that if he’s not engaging in the chase, then he doesn’t want to be with me that much. It’s really challenging—the persistence myth is the hardest for us to change youth’s minds about.” She encourages people of all ages to disengage from the idea that persistence equals interest, and that not listening to a woman’s “no” is endearing. Instead, rely on honest and open communication in relationships, whether they’re romantic or friendly. “Part of healthy intimacy is honesty. [A partner] shouldn’t make you feel shamed and embarrassed for you saying you aren’t interested, or that you are.”

Menaker says she hopes women are “becoming more comfortable being outspoken about their rights and boundaries. Women shouldn’t have to feel constrained by their gender role, and neither should men.” She says change starts with having conversations about rape culture. When she goes into college classes to talk to students, she sees a difference from just several years ago. “They’re far less tolerant [about assault] and far more knowledgeable.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

April 2018
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- National Child Abuse Prevention Month

April 8-14, 2018
- National Crime Victims’ Rights Week

April 19, 2018
- 1BlueStringHubCity Singer/Songwriter Competition Concert Finale
  Wild Wing Café ~ Spartanburg @ 7:00 pm
  www.1bluestringhubcity.com

April 25, 2018
- National Denim Day
  www.denimdayinfo.org

October 2018
- Domestic Violence Awareness Month
- National Bullying Prevention Month

October 12, 2018
- Putting the Pieces Together: An Interpersonal Violence Conference
  First Presbyterian Church ~ Spartanburg, SC
  Registration: 7:30 am / Keynote: 8:30 am
  Programs: 9:30 am - 4:15 pm.

October 24, 2018
- Unity Day 2018. Unite against bullying- Wear and Share Orange! (www.pacer.org)

For more information or services, please call 1.800.273.5066 or 864.583.9803
shrcc@aol.com ~ www.shrcc.org ~ Facebook: SHRCC Spartanburg
Twitter, Instagram & Pinterest: SHRCC

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition (SHRCC) provides services to victims of domestic violence in Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union Counties and victims of sexual assault in Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties.

SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition Mission

The mission of SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis Coalition is to use our collective voice to address the impact of domestic and sexual violence by providing quality services to those affected and to create social change through education, training, and activism.

VISION:

We envision a community liberated from all forms of domestic violence and sexual assault.