

How One Workshop Changed A Teen's Life

Shopping usually isn't a transformative experience.

However, Maddie Hahn, the Manager of JBWS' Dating Abuse Prevention Program, had a powerful exchange with two teenagers while perusing the aisles of a clothing store. The teenagers recognized Maddie from a presentation that she had given on healthy relationships in their health class and decided to approach her. Why?

Because one No2DatingAbuse workshop changed the trajectory of their friend's relationship. They wanted Maddie to know that the information their friend learned in the No2DatingAbuse presentation enabled them to recognize the signs of abuse in their relationship and break up with their partner.

"It was honestly so powerful to hear that what they learned in a 45-minute presentation was enough for them to apply it to their own relationship and then leave the relationship," says Maddie. "This is a perfect example of why these workshops matter."

The No2DatingAbuse workshops, which are provided by JBWS' Dating Abuse Prevention Program (DAPP), provides education about healthy relationships to young people. "The goal of DAPP is to start having these conversations as early as middle school," explains Maddie. "We want to lay the foundation about what they deserve and how they should be treated before they're even entering relationships."

Since DAPP serves young people from sixth grade through the collegiate level, the content of each No2DatingAbuse workshop is tailored to specific age groups. For instance, middle schoolers are taught to identify the behaviors of a good friend and that of a bully so they can begin to recognize the dynamics of power and control. As they get older, the No2DatingAbuse workshops shift toward discussions about bystander intervention, not normalizing unhealthy behaviors, and helping friends making healthy choices.

Each year, about 10,000 students receive No2DatingAbuse workshops. After one of these presentations, a sixth-grade boy asked a poignant question. "He said, 'If you keep doing these presentations, aren't you going to put yourself out of business?'" recalls Maddie. "To which I replied: That's our goal."