**February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month**

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month (TDVAM), (Love is Respect, 2025).  Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) occurs among youth and impacts, families, communities, as well as academic, healthcare, and the judicial systems. The goal of this campaign is to raise everyone’s s awareness about IPV among teens and to promote safe and healthy relationships.

**Statistics**

Teen IPV encompasses many forms including physical violence, sexual violence, psychological aggression, and stalking. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2025b), about 1 in 12 teens experience physical dating violence and 1 in 12 experience sexual dating violence. Females experience higher rates than males and LGBTQ students have higher rates then heterosexual students.

Additionally, about 24% of female victims and 19% of male victims reported being stalked as minors (Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2025a). Further, according to a national survey of youth, 68% of teens experienced educational interference, 67% experienced job interference, and 65% experienced financial control (futureswithoutviolence, 2023). Mitra and colleagues (2013) reported that among high school girls and boys, those with disabilities were more likely to report IPV than their peers without disabilities.

**Occupational Challenges**

While studies specific to OT services and teen IPV are limited, related OT research on adult IPV populations may prove helpful in crafting OT awareness campaigns and interventions for adolescents enduring or surviving IPV (Toccalino, 2024).

Some common occupational issues identified in literature include leisure, education, work, child rearing, and health management (Javaherian, et.al, 2015). Also, deficits in higher level mental functions have been noted (American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2017).

Ballan and Freyer’s (2020), qualitative study focused on survivors of IPV who have physical disabilities. Authors found that the occupational deprivation experienced by IPV survivors with disabilities can trap women in abusive relationships and limited their productive engagement in meaning roles. However, they noted that OTPs can provide education and interventions that increase their ability to live independently.

**Enter OT**

The American Occupational Therapy Association (American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 2017) published a statement defining the role and scope of practice for OTP’s working with IPV victims and their families. The document identifies common causes for domestic violent and while it recognizes its impact on children and youth, it does not directly address teen IPV. OTPs work in a range of practice settings and with client’s across the lifespan, it is likely a d therapist will encounter teens and family experiencing domestic violence. Importantly, occupational therapists are trained to treat both physical and psychosocial conditions, equipping them with skills to holistically address occupational performance deficits with survivors of IPV.

Some essential recommendations for OTPs include knowing and adhering to local laws regarding youth and adult IPV reporting, and acting to promote the health and safety of victims across the lifespan. In addition to addressing client identified areas of concern, other considerations include providing services away from the perpetrator, providing client with relevant resources and maintaining an empathetic non-judgmental stance.

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