

# Same-sex relationships pose abuse risks, too

May 10 2013, by Serena Gordon, Healthday Reporter

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Sheila Rodriguez, at age 15 and today

N.Y. woman recounts verbal and physical violence with first female partner.

(HealthDay)—Though many teens find it difficult to talk about dating violence or abuse, the shroud of secrecy may be even harder to get through for same-sex couples.

New York resident Sheila Rodriguez, 26, was just 13 years old when she started dating another girl in her school. She said it was about a year before the [relationship](#) took a decidedly nasty turn.

"At first, it was all [verbal abuse](#)—putting each other down and name calling," Rodriguez recalled. "We made each other mentally dependent on one another so that neither of us could find someone better."

Then things escalated. "The name-calling led to pushing, shoving, grabbing and eventually, at its worst, scratching, slapping and choking," she said.

Both [girls](#) were guilty of abusing the other. "Sadly, it never really occurred to me that this was wrong," Rodriguez said. "And, if it did for her, she never said so out loud."

Rodriguez said they would come up with excuses for the [physical evidence](#) left on them, like saying that [bruises](#) were from [gym class](#) or that scratches were from the sharp edges of a locker or the family dog. But, she said, few really questioned the marks on them. The other girl's mother did ask but apparently was satisfied with the given explanation, she said.

"Throughout the relationship, the only way we discussed the violence was how to cover it up," Rodriguez said. "It was a very 'us against the world' relationship that no one would understand—we thought. We didn't want to be kept apart or get in trouble. It was our first real relationship, and it's almost like we didn't know anything different."

She said she's sure that if she had been dating a young man, her [parents](#) and others would have raised concerns, but because she was with a girl, no one suspected that violence could be an issue. The situation even blinded both girls to their dysfunctional relationship, she added.

Their final argument, which happened five years after they started dating, was the first time they discussed "stopping the behavior," Rodriguez said. "After swings and blows and each other threatening to call the cops on the other, you sort of sit there out of breath, like, how did we get here?"

Rodriguez said this was the only relationship she's been in where she experienced violence. She said she's learned to walk away if tensions in other relationships escalate to the point where she feels uneasy.

Her advice to others who might find themselves in a similar situation?

"No matter what type of relationship you are in, no one deserves to be verbally or physically abused," Rodriguez said. "The very first hit in a relationship to me makes it a matter of time before it ends. A trust is broken and you never truly feel safe. Trust the voice in the back of your mind, and love yourself enough to make a change if necessary."

**More information:** A companion article offers more on [teen dating violence](#).

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