

## The GirlStrength Program

GirlStrength is a 6-session after-school program for girls ages 11-14. Sessions are 60 minutes each and are designed for school groups, after-school programs, camps and other organizations.

The program will include workshops on media literacy and exposure to alternative girl-positive media and girl empowerment. In addition, GirlStrength will provide participants with information about relational aggression between girls and healthy interactions with dating partners. The informal format will provide girls with the opportunity to be listened to and express their concerns and opinions in a safe and supportive environment. Additionally, girls will be encouraged to celebrate their “girl power” and realize their strengths and unlimited potential. Through education and support, GirlStrength will give girls the tools to build their self-confidence and demand respect in all of their relationships.

Sessions will include large and small group discussions, film clips, media examples, and activities designed to engage girls to actively participate.



## Program Objectives

### Girls will:

- ✳ Demonstrate an increase in confidence and self-esteem;
- ✳ Learn positive strategies to counter poor self-image;
- ✳ Understand how stereotypes can lead to abuse and violence;
- ✳ Gain an understanding of the media’s role in perpetuating these stereotypes;
- ✳ Gain media literacy and become critical of harmful media messages;
- ✳ Understand the difference between flirting and sexual harassment;
- ✳ Increase knowledge about sexual abuse;
- ✳ Understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships;
- ✳ Understand that violence against women is not normal and is always unacceptable.

### What all adolescents need to know.

It is apparent from the data below that adolescents do not have adequate knowledge about how to deal with relationship issues. Many are experiencing disturbing levels of violence in their dating relationships, but only half recognize the warning signs of a dangerous relationship. Tweens and teens need accurate information, coping skills, and support when dealing with these issues.

### Nationally:

- 37% of 11 and 12 year-olds say they have been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship;
- 1 in 5, 13 and 14 year-olds, say their friends are victims of dating violence, such as getting struck, hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend; and
- Nearly 50% of 11 and 12 year-olds in relationships say they know friends who are verbally abused.

*(2008 study commissioned by Liz Claiborne and loveisrespect.org)*

### In Rhode Island:

- 28% of R.I. middle school students stated that they had experienced bullying at their school;
- 32% said that they had received sexual jokes or comments;
- 18% said that they had experienced unwanted grabbing or touching of private areas of the body;
- 8% had been forced to do sexual activities that they did not want to do; and
- 31% believed that it would be okay to force a girl/woman into sex if they have dated “a long time.”

*(findings from surveys of RI middle school students who participated in Day One’s “Keeping Kids Safe” program)*

### Adults are key partners in prevention!

Supportive and understanding adults are the key to girls’ strength! If requested, Day One will provide both a parent and staff workshop with all GirlStrength programs. Workshops provide adults with information about the program topics and how to talk to adolescents about these issues.



## Why GirlStrength?

Recently, the American Psychological Association (APA) released a report by the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (Zurbriggen, et al., 2009). This report states that girls are inundated with media images presenting girls and women as sexual objects. According to the report, the constant bombardment of these images leads girls towards a variety of unhealthy outcomes, ranging from low self-esteem and depression to eating disorders. The objectification of women and girls in the media creates an environment in the culture that supports violence against women, as girls are seen as good for only "one thing" (Zurbriggen et al., 2009).

Exposure to sexualized images of girls and women leads both males and females to the belief that violence against women is normal. Additionally, the sexualization of women and girls also leads girls to compete with each other and police each other's behavior, allowing only for a very narrow expression of acceptable behavior and curtailing their freedom of expression. GirlStrength uses the Positive Youth Development model as a means to focus on the strengths and positive skills that girls already have, and work to further develop them through education about topics ranging from self-esteem-building to healthy relationships.



**Day One's mission** is to reduce the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence and to support and advocate for those affected by it.

Day One is the only agency in Rhode Island organized specifically to deal with issues of sexual assault as a community concern.



**GirlStrength** is a Day One project and is funded by a Preventative Health & Health Services Block Grant, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Health.

For more information about GirlStrength or other education programs, contact Day One's Education Department at (401) 421-4100 ext. 160 or [education@dayoneri.org](mailto:education@dayoneri.org)



**Day One**

Hope. Healing. Action!

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# GirlStrength

A positive approach to abuse prevention



Workshops for adolescent girls to increase self-esteem, confidence and reduce risks of violence

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