

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

It may be hard to know what to do if you think your friend, family member or coworker is in an abusive relationship. You may want to keep the following tips in mind when you are trying to help someone in an abusive relationship.

Be available to help, but don't try to force a particular course of action.

- › Let them know that you're there to support them.
- › Do not push them to make a change that they're not ready to make.
- › Remember there can be many reasons a person believes he or she needs to stay in an abusive relationship.

Listen without judging.

- › People in abusive relationships may already have negative feelings about themselves. They may feel shame and embarrassment about their situation.
- › Try not to pass judgment. This will add to their negative feelings.
- › Ask permission before you make any suggestions.
- › Do not take it personally if they don't take your advice.

Help with "reality checks."

- › Make sure the person knows that what his or her partner is doing is not okay. No one "deserves" abusive treatment. Many people in an abusive situation don't know what a healthy relationship looks like.
- › Let them know that the abuse is not their fault.
- › Point out that physical or emotional abuse in a relationship is not acceptable.

Respect confidentiality.

- › If your friend, family member or coworker chooses not to tell anyone except you, respect their privacy. It could be a matter of safety as well as confidentiality.
- › If you have concerns that keeping the situation private may endanger the person or others, contact one of the resources listed below for help.

Consider ways you are willing to help if they leave.

- › If the person decides to leave the relationship, he or she may need help finding a place to stay, a place to store belongings, help with childcare, or help getting to a shelter.
- › Help them develop a safety plan.
- › Make sure to consider your own safety needs. Do not put yourself in a position of risk. Think about what you are willing and able to provide when the time comes.

Make them aware of local resources.

- › You can help by providing information about domestic violence resources and safety planning. Often people in abusive relationships are unable to safely research this on their own.
- › Remember, you may not be able to help the person in an abusive relationship. You may want to contact one of the resources below for additional information and support. You don't have to do this alone.
- › Even if you don't know the full story, you can still connect with resources out of concern for someone else.

Domestic violence resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (TDD 1-800-787-3224)

Offers crisis intervention, information about sources of help and referrals for shelters, programs, social service agencies, legal programs and other helpful organizations.

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

www.ncadv.org

Get information on developing a safety plan. Find national crises organizations and local resources listed by state.

U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women

www.justice.gov/ovw

Offers information on federal laws as well as links to state and local resources.

Domestic Shelter Locator

www.domesticshelters.org

This online search tool can be used to find help for domestic violence in your zip code and your language.

Warning signs of an abusive relationship

- › Downplaying visible signs of physical injury
- › Using excuses that don't make sense to explain injuries (for example, using the excuse "I fell down the stairs" to explain a black eye)
- › Fearfulness when a partner's name is mentioned
- › Crying for no apparent reason
- › Blaming themselves for their partner's behavior
- › Receiving harassing phone calls, e-mails, or texts
- › Becoming upset when receiving phone calls at work
- › Telling concerning stories about family/personal life
- › Having a partner who makes all of the decisions
- › Having a partner who only allows them to talk to certain people

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