



# How to Support Someone Experiencing Domestic Abuse

October is Domestic Violence Awareness month. Domestic violence can affect anyone. It does not discriminate based on race, age, marital status, education or income. It is often times overlooked, people look away thinking it is not their business, they are not sure if what they are seeing is abuse or they don't know what they can do to help. I want to share some information with you so if you know someone you care about that may be in an abusive relationship you can take some steps to try and help them.

## **Have a Private Conversation**

Any conversation you have with your loved one should be outside the presence of their partner/others.

### **Ask if they would like to talk**

You might consider letting this person know that you are worried about them or concerned for their safety. Ask if they would like to talk, and if they would be open to you sharing some of what you've noticed about their partner's actions. Respect their boundaries if they aren't ready to talk but let them know you are available if they change their mind.

### **Be supportive and listen to your friend or family member**

Remember that it may be difficult for them to talk about the abuse. Let them know that you are available to help when they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

### **Acknowledge the situation**

Acknowledge that they are in a very difficult and scary situation. Let your friend or family member know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure them that they are not alone and that there is help and support out there.

### **Follow their pace**

Don't push them to talk about something they don't want to, tell them what they "have to" do, or give them an ultimatum.

### **Don't be judgmental**

Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims/survivors stay in abusive relationships. They may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize their decisions or try to guilt them. They will need your support even more during those times.

### **Develop a safety plan**

If they are open to your help, help them to develop a safety plan. Contact a local domestic violence program for more information on how to safety plan with your friend.

### **Provide Resources**

Encourage them to talk to people who can provide help and guidance. Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Offer to go with them to talk to family and friends. If they have to go to the police, court or a lawyer, offer to go along for moral support.

Take care of yourself, witnessing the pain of someone you care about can take its toll. You may even experience vicarious trauma, which is emotional distress that results from hearing about or witnessing the traumatic experiences of others. Seek the help and support that you need, while still respecting your friend's privacy and confidentiality.

**National  
Domestic  
Violence 24-  
Hour Hotline**

**1-800-799-7233  
(SAFE)**



If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact  
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