

# HOW TO HELP SOMEONE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

## Domestic Violence Awareness

It may be hard to know what to do if you think your friend, family member or co-worker 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.

### Know the signs of abuse

- › Review the warning signs and what you might see in an abusive relationship.
- › For virtual communication, pick up on clues through virtual, text, or verbal communication.
- › Make note of changes to mood or affect when partner is in the room.

### Do regular check-ins

- › If you can and if it is safe, visit in person – meet in a public place, visit on the patio, or do a drive-by visit to see how they are.
- › Remember that their partner may be at home during this time, so be mindful of how you check in. See if you can establish a code phrase or question to check in.
- › Text messaging may be a good way to have an open and honest conversation. Make sure it is safe before texting anything that could be interpreted as inflammatory.

### 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.
- › Ask permission before you make any suggestions.
- › Don't push them to make a change that they're not ready to make.
- › Don't take it personally if they don't take your advice.
- › They may not be ready to share with you what is happening or take a particular course of action. Let them know you are a source of support.

### 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
- › Having a partner who makes all of the decisions
- › Having a partner who only allows them to talk to certain people

### Warning signs in remote workplaces

- › Stops using video in meetings
- › Expresses anxiety over family members watching or listening to what they say or do during calls
- › Wears more makeup than usual
- › Stops participating when they otherwise would
- › Sudden change in home circumstances
- › Unresponsiveness that is out of the norm
- › Changes in behavior, communication style, demeanor

### Warning signs during a pandemic

- › Inability to speak freely when partner is near
- › Withholding of medical or cleaning supplies
- › Worries over partner canceling health insurance
- › Believing false information regarding their safety or health precautions.

## Be ready to act if they leave or ask for help

- › Help them develop a safety plan.
- › Ask for permission to reach out for or connect them with additional help.
- › Consider what you are willing or able to offer, up to and including: a place to stay, a place to store belongings, help with childcare, or help getting to a shelter.
- › 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.

## Respect confidentiality

- › If your friend, family member or co-worker 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 here for help.

## 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](http://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](http://www.justice.gov/ovw)

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

### Domestic Shelter Locator

[www.domesticshelters.org](http://www.domesticshelters.org)

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

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