



## Relationship violence: How to help

Do you know someone who is being abused? It is quite possible that you do. Many friends, family members, and employers suspect someone they know is being abused. They want to help, but don't know how. The following may help you recognize abuse and learn how to respond sensitively to a survivor.

### Warning signs

- Frequent injuries including bruises, burns, and cuts which the survivor may try to hide.
- Claims of being accident-prone or suspicious stories that explain injuries (e.g. I ran into a door, etc).

- Harassing phone calls while at work or when visiting.
- Isolation from friends and family, talking to few people at work.
- Constantly being without money or access to transportation.
- Expressing fear of making the partner angry
- Occupying a very passive place in the relationship.
- An extremely controlling and jealous partner.

## Why doesn't the survivor just leave?

This may seem like a simple question, but the reality is more complex. Understanding why someone stays in an abusive relationship can help you approach and listen with more compassion and understanding. The reasons may include:

- They may love their partner.
- The good times convince the survivor that their partner will change, or that the batterer really didn't mean it.
- They may be embarrassed for others to find out.
- Religious beliefs may keep them in the marriage.
- The survivor may have no access to money.
- The batterer may have threatened to kill the survivor if he or she leaves.
- The batterer may threaten to take, hurt, or kill the children.
- The survivor may be immobilized by depression.

## What to say or do

- "I've noticed (you seem very unhappy, you have a bruise on your face, you seem afraid of your partner). I'm concerned that someone is hurting you."
- "Do you want to talk about it?"
- "I'm worried for you."
- "This is not your fault."
- "I care about you. Your safety is important to me."
- "I'm sorry this is happening to you."
- Gently remind the survivor that domestic violence usually gets worse, and there are places which provide help.
- Ask how you can help. Sometimes just listening without judgment is what the survivor really needs.
- If your friend or co-worker needs assistance, a place to stay, or safety planning, refer to the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) (TDD: 1-800-799-3224). Or call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for help and information.

## What NOT to say

- "I know how you feel."
- "Why don't you just leave?"
- "Are you crazy?"
- "How can you let him/her do that to you?"
- "You must have done something to make them react this way."