



## How To Help Someone Who Is Being Abused

You might think that something as simple as talking to a friend about abuse couldn't possibly make a difference. But it really does. Just knowing that someone cares enough to ask about the abuse can break through the wall of isolation that can exist around victims of relationship abuse. If you think a student/resident or friend is being abused, talk to her about it. Listen to her. Let her know you care. You don't have to be an expert. You just need to be there.

- **Listen, without judging.** Often an abused woman believes her abuser's negative messages about her. She may feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate and afraid she will be judged by you.
- **Tell her the abuse is not her fault.** Explain that physical violence in a relationship is never acceptable. There's no excuse for it – not alcohol or drugs, financial pressure, depression, jealousy or any behavior of hers.
- **Make sure she knows she is not alone.** Millions of women of every age, race and religion face abuse, and many women find it extremely difficult to deal with the abuse. **Emphasize that when she wants help, it is available.** Let her know that domestic violence tends to get worse and become more frequent with time and that it rarely goes away on its own. Eliminate isolation by letting her know that she can come talk to you when she feels lonely.
- **Explain that relationship abuse is a crime and that there are resources.** She can seek protection from the police or courts, and help from a local domestic violence program. Suggest that she call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE, for advice and referrals.
- **Suggest that she develop a safety plan in case of emergency.** Have a plan if she needs to change residences, classes, etc. Arrange for a safe ride, or keep taxi money on hand. It's a good idea to keep money, important documents, a change of clothes, and an extra set of keys in a safe place, such as at a friend or neighbor's house.
- **Empower her to make her own decisions.** She has been stripped of power in her relationship, so it is important to validate her feelings and let her make her own choices.
- **Integrate her expertise and knowledge about her situation.** She knows how her partner will react more than anyone else. Do not intervene with him until you find out if it is safe for her to do so. Let her know in advance about people you need to tell so that she can take precautions if necessary. Tell only those you need to tell to increase her safety and as required.
- **Get advice.** If you want to talk with someone yourself to get advice about a particular situation, contact a local domestic violence program/hotline.

“How to Help Someone Who Is Being Abused” is courtesy of the Family Violence Prevention Fund, “Help a Friend in Need”, [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org).