

DON'T BE A BYSTANDER: stop relationship abuse.

Don't be another bystander! Abuse is a choice and part of the reason abusers abuse is because no one has held them accountable in the past. What follows is a list of warning signs of an abusive relationship and a list of excuses abusers often use to justify their behavior.

A NOTE ON PRONOUNS:

Relationship abuse can happen to anyone—regardless of race, social class or sexuality—and people being abused and people who perpetrate abuse can be either male or female, but studies by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control all conclude that survivors of relationship abuse are overwhelmingly female—the pronouns that follow reflect these statistics. ***This does not mean all men are abusive. In the same way that most NFL players are men, but most men aren't NFL players—most abusers are men, but most men aren't abusive.***

WARNING SIGNS OF AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP FROM A FRIEND'S PERSPECTIVE:

- When your friend and her partner are together, he acts very controlling and puts her down in front of other people.
- You see her partner lose his temper, striking or breaking objects.
- Her partner acts extremely jealous of others who pay attention to her.
- She becomes quiet when he is around and seems afraid of making him angry.
- She stops seeing her friends and family members, becoming more and more isolated.
- She often has unexplained injuries, or the explanations she offers don't quite add up. (Sometimes you won't see any bruises, as abusers target their blows to areas that can be covered with clothing.)
- She has casually mentioned his violent behavior but dismissed what happened as “not a big deal.”
- She often cancels plans at the last minute after checking in with her partner.
- Her partner controls her behavior and even who she socializes with.

Educate yourself and name abuse for what it is. **If you know the person being abused, always talk to her before taking any action.** If you know the abuser, let him/her know that you think violence in a relationship, including threats, is unacceptable and that there's never a reason for it.

EXCUSES ABUSIVE PEOPLE USE TO JUSTIFY THEIR BEHAVIOR:

- Someone has to be in charge. If I don't control her, she'll control me.
- It takes two to tango. She pushes my buttons and she knows what makes me mad.
- If she didn't like it, she wouldn't stay with me.
- It was because I was drinking/doing drugs. I would never do that sober.
- It's just a bad relationship.
- We can't communicate any other way.
- I barely touched her. She exaggerates.
- I can't change until she gets help too.
- Sometimes you have to be a little rough to make your point.
- Stress pushes me over the top.

Every person has a right to a violence-free life, and there is no excuse for abusive behavior. The simple act of someone saying something and naming this behavior “abuse” is enough to get people thinking about how they treat the people around them.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND:

- A common reaction is the urge to retaliate against the abuser—retaliation is not helpful! Your first step as a friend should always be to talk to her before taking any action to confront the abuser.
- Listen, without judging. Be there to support her.
- Tell her that the abuse is not her fault. There is no excuse for abusive behavior and it is never acceptable.
- Empower her to make her own decisions. Don't be another person to control her.
- Get advice and direct her to resources.

RESOURCES:

National Relationship Abuse hotline – 1.800.799.7233 (24 hours, confidential)

RAINN: Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network — (800) 656-4673 (24 hours, confidential)

For more information go to stoprelationshipabuse.org