

Ways you can support friends and family members in abusive relationships

▶ **Help your friend recognize the abuse.**

Point out the different types of abuse in dating relationships.

▶ **Express your concerns.**

Tell your friend you are glad he/she confided in you. Let her/him know you are sorry this is happening. You can never say the following phrases too much:

- I'm worried about you.
- It's not your fault.
- You deserve better.
- I'm here for you.
- I'm glad you confided in me.

▶ **Support your friend's strength.**

Point out how your friend is able to take care of his/herself. Encourage your friend to spend time with others and to take time away from the relationship.

▶ **Be accepting.**

Tell your friend you are worried about her/his safety. Let your friend know you are there for them, and mean it. Don't become upset if your friend is not ready to break off the relationship yet. Try to understand that your friend is dealing with some difficult emotions including love and fear. If your friend wants to stay in the relationship, or keeps returning to the abusive partner, refrain from telling him/her that they are wrong. Help your friend see they are not to blame for the violence and that changing their behavior will not stop the abuse. Help your friend recognize the abuser's excuses for being violent.

▶ **Work on a Safety Plan.**

Help your friend think of ways to be safe. Look at patterns in the abuser's behavior to figure out when the abuser is explosive or violent. Help your friend decide how and where she/he would go if they had to leave home quickly. Offer to walk or ride with them to school or work or invite them to spend the night at your house. Find local resources that can offer additional support.

▶ **Be there, listen, and stay there.**

You may feel like a broken record and that your friend is not really listening. Keep supporting your friend. By avoiding blame, they will know you are standing beside them. When they are ready to end the relationship, continue to be supportive and try to get them involved in activities. It takes a while to get over any relationship, even one that is violent. Help your friend resist the pressure to get back together.

▶ **Reach out for help.**

Call area resources for ideas on how to help your friend.

► **Keep educating yourself on domestic/dating violence.**

Coping with Dating Violence by Nancy Rue, *Why Does He Do That?* By Lundy Bancroft, and *When Love Goes Wrong* by Susan Schechter and Ann Jones are a few of the many good books about violence in relationships. Check your local library or domestic violence program to borrow these or other materials.

If you are frightened or frustrated, get support for yourself. Remember, you can't single-handedly rescue your friend or solve all of their problems.