

IF AN ADULT YOU KNOW IS BEING ABUSED...



You may have a friend, relative, or neighbor who is being abused. You may have witnessed the violence, heard it, seen physical signs of it, or merely suspected it for various reasons.

What should you do?

1. Ask direct questions, gently. Give her/him ample opportunity to talk. Don't rush into providing solutions.
2. Listen — without judging. Abused women/men often *believe* their abuser's negative messages. They feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate, and are afraid they will be judged.
3. Let her/him know that you support and care about her/him, that she's/he's not responsible for the violence, that *only* the abuser can stop the violence.
4. Explain that physical violence in a relationship is never acceptable, at any time. There's no excuse for it — not alcohol or drugs, not financial pressures, not depression, not jealousy.
5. Make sure she/he knows that she's/he's not alone — that millions of American women/men from every ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic group suffer from abuse, and that many women/men find it difficult to leave.
6. Also explain that domestic violence is a crime — as much of a crime as robbery or rape — and that she/he can seek protection from the justice system.
7. If she/he has children, reinforce her/his concern for them, letting her/him know that domestic violence is damaging to children. In fact, you may want to reach out to support the children, and let them know you're there for them, too.
8. Let her/him know that it is likely that, in spite of his/her promises, the violence will continue and, probably, escalate.
9. Emphasize that when she/he is ready, she/he can make a choice to leave the relationship, and that there is help available.
10. Provide her/him with information about local resources — the phone number of the local domestic violence hotline, support groups, counseling, shelter programs, and legal advocacy services.
11. She/he may need financial assistance, or help finding a place to live, or a place to store her/his belongings. She/he may need assistance to escape. Decide if you feel comfortable helping out in these ways.
12. Contact your local domestic violence program yourself for advice and guidance.
13. If she/he is planning to leave, remind her/him to take important papers with her/him, such as birth certificates, passports, health insurance documents, etc.
14. If she/he remains in the relationship, continue to be her/his friend while at the same time firmly communicating to her/him that she/he and her/his children do not deserve to be in this violent situation.
15. If you see or hear an assault in progress, call the police. But because these assaults are often dangerous, do not physically intervene.