



# How to help a friend end domestic violence

## Allow your friend to tell his or her story

- Let your friend know that you believe the story and want to hear it.

## Help your friend identify his or her feelings

- Support his or her right to be angry – don't deny any feelings
- Legitimize his or her feelings – fear, embarrassment, confusion, and the feeling of “being crazy” are very natural reactions to an extremely traumatic situation.
- Don't diagnose the problem – focus on emotional support and concrete problem solving.

## Offer support – not pressure

- One of the abuser's tactics is to make the victim feel powerless. So the decision to leave will only be effective if it is your friend's own decision.
- Your friend needs you to care, not to push advice or force decisions.
- Help your friend assess resources and build a support system.

## Avoid blaming the victim

- One person is never responsible for the violence of another person. Hold the batterer accountable, not the victim.
- If your friend returns to the abuser, don't convey disappointment. Convey that you still care, and that you will always be there to help.

## Avoid stereotyping

- Domestic violence crosses all lines of race, religion, class, sexual orientation, and education.

## Be sensitive to the differences among people of various races, cultures, and classes

- Although there are many commonalities among people, each of us is different, and each of us has had different life experiences.
- Your friend's cultural values and beliefs may have been a source of security in the past, and their importance should not be minimized.

## Help your friend make safety plans

- Let your friend store money, important documents, photos, or clothes at your house in preparation for an eventual escape.
- Help your friend gather information about domestic violence counseling.

## Encourage counseling, medical attention, or other support people

- Help your friend reach out, but don't break their confidentiality. It could be dangerous if the abuser finds out about your involvement and could lead to social isolation for your friend.

## Call the police, or encourage your friend to do so

- Assault is a crime. The more times the abuser is recorded in police files, the more likely it is that when a concrete legal action is taken, the case will be handled in a serious manner.

## For confidential support and information, contact:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233 (1-800-799-SAFE)

1-800-787-3224 (TTY)

Ndvh.org