

The following is a brief list of behaviors most often observed in abusers and victims; however, the most important thing to listen to is your own instinct, do you think you are in an abusive relationship? If so, it is important that you talk to a professional, better safe than sorry.

Does your Partner...

- Embarrass or make fun of you in front of friends or family?
- Put down your accomplishments or goals?
- Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?
- Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?
- Tell you that you are nothing without them?
- Treat you roughly-grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?
- Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- Blame you for how they feel or act?
- Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- Make you feel like there "is no way out" of the relationship?
- Prevent you from doing things you want-like spending time with your friends or family?
- Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere after a fight to "teach you a lesson"?

Do You...

- Sometimes feel scared of how your partner will act?
- Constantly make excuses to other people for your partner's behavior?
- Believe that you can help your partner change if only you changed something about yourself?
- Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or make your partner angry?
- Feel like no matter what you do, your partner is never happy with you?
- Always do what your partner wants you to do instead of what you want?
- Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you broke up?

What should I do to help my friend or family member that is experiencing domestic violence in their relationship? If you are supporting a friend who is experiencing domestic violence remember there are a few things that you should avoid doing. They include:

- Telling them what to do.
- Letting them know you are disappointed if they don't do what you have suggested or if they go back to their partner.
- Making comments that imply they are to blame for the abuse,
- Trying to mediate between the partners.
- Confronting the abusive partner - this can be dangerous for you and for the abused partner.

Getting involved doesn't mean you have to solve the situation. If someone turns to you for help and support it means helping them find their own answers. You cannot 'save' them and it is important not to be disappointed if they don't do what you think they should. Leaving a violent relationship is difficult, it can be dangerous and it may take time.

APPROACHING A FRIEND

If you think a friend is experiencing abuse but they haven't said anything to you, you could ask them if they need support or information. If you decide to approach a friend:

- Make sure you are somewhere where they can talk without others hearing or interrupting - especially their partner.
- Maybe start by saying something like, 'I'm worried about you because you seem unhappy ...'.
- Don't push them into talking if they aren't comfortable.
- Don't be surprised if they are defensive or reject your support - it may not be the right time for them to talk about it.

If they downplay or deny the abuse or aren't willing to talk let them know you are there to support them and wait for a sign that they are ready to talk.

EMOTIONAL & PRACTICAL SUPPORT

If the person experiencing the violence tells you about it there are a number of things you can do to support them. They include:

- Listening to what they tell you without judging them.
- Believing what they tell you - remember most people down-play the abuse they are experiencing so in most cases it will be worse than they are describing.
- Acknowledging their fear and taking their concerns seriously.
- Letting them know the abuse is not their fault and that they don't have to put up with it.
- Asking them what you can do to help them.
- In general, keep what they have told you confidential unless they give you permission to tell others. If, in a crisis, you believe your friend or their children are at immediate risk of harm you can call the police.

Encourage the person to make his or her own decisions. You can help them to make decisions if they want you too but don't tell them what to do.