

## How to Help a Friend or Family Member Who is Being Abused

**Don't be afraid to let him or her know that you are concerned for their safety.** Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse. Tell him or her you see what is going on and that you want to help. Help them recognize that what is happening is not "normal" and that they deserve a healthy, non-violent relationship.

**Acknowledge that he or she is in a very difficult and scary situation.** Let your friend or family member know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure him or her that they are not alone and that there is help and support out there.

**Be supportive.** Listen to your friend or family member. Remember that it may be difficult for him or her to talk about the abuse. Let him or her know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

**Be non-judgmental.** Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. He or she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize his or her decisions or try to guilt them. He or she will need your support even more during those times.

**Encourage him or her to participate in activities outside of the relationship with friends and family.**

**If he or she ends the relationship, continue to be supportive of them.** Even though the relationship was abusive, your friend or family member may still feel sad and lonely once it is over. He or she will need time to mourn the loss of the relationship and will especially need your support at that time.

**Help him or her to develop a safety plan.**

**Encourage him or her to talk to people who can provide help and guidance.** Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Offer to go with him or her to talk to family and friends. If he or she has to go to the police, court or a lawyer, offer to go along for moral support.

**Remember that you cannot "rescue" him or her.** Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately the person getting hurt has to be the one to decide that they want to do something about it. It's important for you to support him or her and help them find a way to safety and peace.

**Please call the 24-hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224 to discuss your concerns and questions.**

