

HOW TO SUPPORT A FRIEND IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

What is relationship abuse?

- Relationship abuse is the use of intimidation and/or force by one person to maintain power over another. It can include any form of verbal, emotional, mental, physical, spiritual and/or sexual abuse/violence, and can happen in all types of relationships. In an abusive relationship, it is not unusual for the abuser to express remorse after a violent outburst and then ask for forgiveness, promising that "it will never happen again." Unfortunately, it usually does, thus perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

How can you be supportive?

- Remember, you can't solve the situation for your friend. But here are some things you can do that are helpful for both of you:
 - **Ask:** Does your friend seem to miss a lot of school or work? Has their sleep or eating habits changed? Do they have low self-esteem? Have you noticed bruises or signs of physical abuse on your friend's body? Do they seem sad, distracted, or depressed? These may be signs of an abusive relationship, and shame may prevent a person from telling someone else. For these reasons, it is okay and important to ask a friend if they are being abused.
 - **Be a good listener:** Let your friend talk; don't be judgmental, interrupt, or give advice. Just sitting and listening to your friend can reassure them that you care and are here for them. Be patient because sharing about an abuse relationship can be difficult.
 - **Offer assistance:** Ask your friend how you can support them. For example, they may need help locating safe, supportive resources. Be clear about setting your limits about what you can and cannot do. Setting limits to support your friend will empower both of you.

Resources

- National Domestic Violence Hotline | 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE) | www.ndvh.org
- National Dating Abuse Helpline | 1-866-331-9474 | www.loveisrespect.org
- National Child Abuse Hotline/Childhelp | 1-800-422-4453 (CHILD) | www.childhelp.org
- Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence | 1-415-954-9988 | www.apiidv.org



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Books

- But He'll Change: End the Thinking That Keeps You in an Abusive Relationship by Hunter
- Ditch that Jerk: Dealing with Men Who Control and Hurt Women by Jayne
- Getting Free: A Handbook for Women In Abusive Relationships by NicCarthy
- Domestic Violence Sourcebook by Berry
- It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence by Dugan and Hock by Levy
- In Love and In Danger: A Teen's Guide to Breaking Free of Abusive Relationships
- Next Time, She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It by Jones
- No More Secrets: Violence In Lesbian Relationships by Ristock
- No Secrets, No Lies: How Black Families Can Heal from Sexual Abuse by Stone
- You Can Be Free: An Easy To Read Handbook for Abused Women by NicCarthy and Davidson

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