



rape and abuse
crisis center

advocacy. counseling. education.

How to Help a Friend Dealing with Relationship Violence

Listen. Give your undivided attention. Let him/her know that you have heard what was said. Ask respectful questions.

Believe. Believe what she/he is telling you. Recognize that disclosing to you takes a great deal of strength and courage. People rarely lie about violence.

Understand what she/he is saying. Devote your efforts to understanding the thoughts, feelings, and experiences the victim has chosen to share with you. You might say "You must have been frightened," or "I'm sorry this happened."

Validate feelings and strength. By disclosing to you, she/he has just taken a major step in dealing with the pain of relationship violence. It is extremely important for you to validate both the feelings expressed and the strength it took to share them with you. One example might be "I'm glad you told me."

Help devise a safety plan. It is essential to talk about physical safety. An example of a way to begin this dialogue might be "I'm concerned for your physical safety. Could we talk about how you might try to be safe?"

Help understand that the violence is not her/his fault. She/he may feel guilty for several reasons. Our culture reinforces the ideas that 1) women determine the success or failure of their relationships; 2) women are responsible for making men happy; 3) a woman can change a man's behavior; and 4) women are to blame if their partner chooses to abuse them. **NONE OF THESE ARE TRUE.** Help erase guilt by saying, for example, "This is not your fault," or "You have done nothing to deserve this treatment."

Support the right to control his/her own life. Sometimes we think we know what is best for a friend. Don't expect her/him to follow your advice. Remember that ultimately she/he must be the one to make decisions regarding her/his own life. For example, you might say "I know this is a decision only you can make. Whatever you decide, remember I'll stand by you."

Provide helpful resource information. Call the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center (701) 293-7273 to learn where to get help. Place the initial call if your friend so wishes. You may also encourage medical attention, if needed.

Protect her/his right to confidentiality. Recognize their choice to disclose to you. Respect his/her right to tell whomever she/he chooses. It is not your place to inform others.

24-hour Crisis Line (701)293-7273
www.raccfm.com

07/12

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