



HELPING a Friend or Family Member

1. **Don't be afraid to let her know that you are concerned for her safety.** Help her recognize the abuse. Tell her you see what is going on and you want to help. Help her to recognize that what is happening is not "normal" and that she deserves a healthy, non-violent relationship.
2. **Acknowledge that she is in a very difficult and scary situation.** Encourage her strength and courage. Let her know that it is not her fault that she is being abused – the abuser, not the victim, is responsible for the abuse. Let her know she is not alone.
3. **Be supportive.** Listen to her. Remember that it may be difficult for her to talk about the abuse. Let her know you are available to help whenever she needs it. What she needs most is someone who will listen to and believe her and who can help her sort out her options.
4. **Be non-judgmental.** Respect her decisions. There are many complex reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. She may break up with and go back to the abuser many times. Do not criticize her for doing that. She will need your support even more during those times. Do not make her feel bad for her choices, even if you think these choices are wrong.
5. **Encourage her to do things with you and other friends and family and to take part in other activities outside of her relationship.**
6. **If she breaks up with the abuser, continue to be supportive of her once she is alone.** Even though the relationship was abusive, she will probably feel sad and lonely when it is over. She may be tempted to get back together with the abuser, and will especially need your support at that time.
7. **Help her develop a safety plan.** Help her think of what she will do when the violence occurs again, phone numbers for emergency shelter and advocacy, a list of items she needs for herself and children, a place she can go if she needs to leave quickly.
8. **Encourage her to talk to people who can give her help and guidance.** Offer to go with her to find a counselor or support group, or to talk to her family, friends or teachers. If she is going to the police, to court, or to see a lawyer, offer to go along, but make sure to let her do the talking.
9. **Remember that you cannot "rescue" her.** You should be there to support her and to help her find her own way to escape the abuse and make herself safe.

Resource Numbers

Minnesota Toll-Free Domestic Violence Crisis Line – 866.223.1111 (24 hour)

Men's Line – 612.379.6367 (24 hour)

Domestic Abuse Project Advocacy Program – 612.673.3526 (M-F 8:30-4:30)

Domestic Abuse Project Therapy Program – 612.874.7063 (M-F 9:00 – 5:00)

This is modified from the Break the Cycle website, www.break-the-cycle.org