

How to support a friend or family member

Warning signs of an abusive relationship.

- The woman often has unexplained injuries, or the explanations she offers don't quite add up.
- Her partner controls her finances, her behaviour and even who she socialises with.
- She stops seeing her family and friends, becoming more isolated.
- She has casually mentioned his violent behaviour but dismissed what happened as "not a big deal".
- She becomes quiet when he is around and seems afraid of making him angry.
- She often cancels plans at the last minute
- Her child is frequently upset or very quiet and withdrawn and will not say why.
- When she is with her partner, he acts very controlling & puts her down in front of other people.
- He acts extremely jealous of others who pay attention to her, especially men.
- You see her partner violently lose his temper, striking or breaking objects.

Talking to a friend/family member who is being abused...

- Listen, without judging - She may feel responsible, ashamed, inadequate and afraid of being judged.
- Tell her the abuse is not her fault - Explain that physical violence in a relationship is not acceptable and there is no excuse for it.
- Make sure she knows she is not alone – Many women find it extremely difficult to ask for help with violence in their relationships. Emphasise that when she wants help, it is available.
- Suggest that she develop a safety plan in case of an emergency - it is a good idea to keep money, important documents, a change of clothes and an extra set of keys in a safe place, such as at a friend's or neighbour's house.
- Think about ways you might feel comfortable helping her - if she decides to leave her relationship, she may need money, assistance finding a place to stay or a place to store belongings, helping her make a police report, taking her to a support service.
- Get Advice - If you need to talk to someone yourself to get advice about a particular situation, contact a domestic violence service or helpline.
- Try not to denigrate or criticise the abuser as the woman may feel like she needs to defend him, focus on her right to be safe.
- Domestic violence is a crime and violent incidents can be reported to 000 or the local police, she may not be willing to call the police or may need someone to go with her to report a violent incident or she can get assistance from a domestic violence service or helpline.

What if your friend/family member decides to stay in the relationship?

This can be frustrating when a friend decided to stay in an abusive relationship. It is important to understand that there are many reasons for these decisions and leaving an abusive relationship takes time. There are ways in which you can still help.

- Assist her to identify resources to help her take care of herself.
- Encourage her to keep a log of what is happening to her, including any evidence such as emails, letters or voicemails.
- Suggest she tell her doctor about what is happening, asking them to document the abuse in her medical records.
- Encourage her to call a domestic violence service or helpline to get assistance developing a safety plan.



