

10 Ways to Help a Friend or Family Member Who is Being Abused

**Helping someone who is being abused isn't always easy.
Day One can show you how to support someone without contributing to the danger.**

- 1. Take a Deep Breath.** Before you say anything to your friend/family member, take time to think about your relationship with the person and what this person means to you. The type of relationship that you share will affect your approach. Monitor your own emotions: You're in the best position to help someone else when you're open-minded and patient.
- 2. Don't be afraid to tell her 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 see that what is happening is not "normal" and she deserves a healthy, non-violent relationship.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Be supportive.** Listen to her. Remember, it may be difficult for her to talk about the abuse. Let her know you can help out 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.
- 5. Be non-judgmental.** Respect her decisions. There are complex reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. She may break up with and go back to the abuser many times. Don't criticize her for doing that. She will need your support even more at those times. Don't make her feel bad for her choices – even if you think the choices are wrong.
- 6. Encourage her to do things with you and other friends and family and to take part in other activities outside of her relationship.**
- 7. If she breaks up with the abuser, continue to be supportive of her after the break-up.** 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.
- 8. Help her develop a safety plan.** Safety Planning helps a victim think ahead about how to protect herself. A safety plan is developed before a dangerous situation arises rather than at the last minute. A safety plan identifies dangers to avoid and resources for help.
- 9. 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.
- 10. Remember you cannot "rescue" her.** Although it's difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately the victim must make the final decision. You should be there to support her and help her find her own way to escape the abuse and make herself safe.

***Note:** We refer to victims as "she" and abusers as "he" because that is the reality of most reported cases of relationship violence. However, boys and men can be victims, and girls and women can be abusers; and domestic violence occurs in same-sex relationships at the same rate as in heterosexual relationships. The above information applies equally in those cases.*