

Guidelines for the Effective Support Person

Many individuals are uncomfortable with addressing the abusive behaviors that they see in the relationships of others. They may believe that it is not their place to become involved in someone else's relationship. They may fear upsetting the victim or may feel that they do not know enough about abuse to help the victim. In some cases, the abuser may be your friend. Talking to someone who is in a domestic violence situation may be challenging, but by offering support, you may save a life. Below are a few guidelines that may help you to be a more effective support person.

1. Educate yourself (and the victim)

Learn about the different forms of domestic violence and how dynamics of power and control can influence relationships. Learn the characteristics of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships and the barriers that prevent victims from seeking help. Know the resources that are available to help those involved in unhealthy or abusive relationships.

2. Trust the victim

Tell them it's not their fault. Tell them they do not deserve it. Believe them, and let them know that you do. Don't spread gossip – it could put them in danger.

3. Provide resources

Don't blame them for the decisions they make – leaving is hard. Encourage them to build a support system – support group, friends, and family. Give them information about abuse – crisis lines, get information and support.

How to Start the Conversation

Things to say to the victim

- You seem to be having a hard time. Whenever you want to talk about it, I am willing to listen and will keep it between us.
- I couldn't help but hear your argument last night, and I was worried about you. Are you okay? Were you hurt?
- I notice that you are upset after being on the phone with you partner, do you want to talk about it?
- How does your partner handle things when he/she doesn't get his/her way?

Things to say to the abuser

- I am your friend and I care about you, and I want you to know that I think it is wrong to hit or hurt another person.
- I will continue to support you, but I will not ignore your behavior. Your violence is inexcusable.
- I am uncomfortable discussing relationship issues with you as long as you continue to use violence.
- You may go to jail or lose your family if you do not stop the abuse. There are treatment programs available that can help you have a healthier relationship and get your needs met without hurting those you love.



Asian Women's Home
A program of Asian Americans for Community Involvement (AACI).
Services provided in English and Asian languages.
24-Hour Domestic Violence Hotline: 408-975-2739

