

Intimate Partner Violence: Supporting Others

Watching someone endure an abusive situation can be difficult under any circumstances, and it's not always clear how best to respond when you recognize warning signs of abuse. Your instinct may be to "save them" from the relationship, but abuse is never that simple. There are many ways that abuse appears and there are many reasons why people stay in abusive situations. The following tips will help you in supporting others. Visit the **National Domestic Violence Hotline: thehotline.org** for more information, resources, and services.

Emotional Support:

The experience of surviving relationship abuse is traumatic, and people in any stage of an abusive relationship should be able to depend on others for support as they process complex emotions and navigate next steps.

You can provide essential emotional support by:

- Acknowledging that their situation is difficult and scary.
- Not judging their decisions and refusing to criticize or guilt them over a choice they make.
- Remembering that you cannot "rescue them," and that decisions about their lives are up to them to make.
- Not speaking poorly of the abusive partner.
- Helping them create a safety plan, and supporting them regardless of their choices.
- Offering to go with them to any service provider or legal setting for moral support.

Material Support:

Depending on the situation, a survivor may be financially dependent on an abusive partner or otherwise lacking access to material resources. One of the most immediate ways you can support someone experiencing relationship abuse is by helping them with their material needs.

You can provide essential material support by:

- Help them identify a support network to assist with physical needs like housing, food, and healthcare.
- Help them by storing important documents or holding on to a "to-go bag" in case of an emergency.
- Encourage them to participate in activities outside of their relationship with friends and family.
- Encourage them to talk to people who can provide further help and guidance, like The Hotline or the EAP.
- If they give you permission, help document instances of the abuse in their life, including pictures of injuries, exact transcripts of interactions, and notes on a calendar of dates that incidents occurred.
- Don't post info about them online that could be used to identify them or their whereabouts.
- Help them learn about their formal legal rights through resources like Women's Law: **womenslaw.org**, which provides information on domestic violence laws and procedures.
- With their permission, ensure that others around them are aware of the situation, including what to do (and what not to do) during a moment of crisis or confrontation with an abusive partner.

If you recognize an abusive situation and need additional resources and support, reach out to the EAP or visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline website: thehotline.org for assistance.