HOW TO HELP A FRIEND IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

What is domestic violence or intimate partner violence? It may involve pushing, kicking, slapping, or punching. Forced sex, name calling, intimidation, humiliation, possessiveness, and emotional withdrawal are also forms abuse may take.

Who might experience battery or abuse in a relationship? Anyone. Your roommate, friend, co-worker, or family member. A person of any culture, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, or gender.

Ask yourself some questions.
• How do you already support your friend? How could you continue this support?
• What resources does this person already have to draw on? (physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, legal, etc.)
• What kind of support do YOU have for yourself?

Consider the challenges your friend, family member, or co-worker might be facing.
Feelings of fear and isolation
Children
Embarrassment and shame
batterer/abuser
Family and peer pressure to stay
No place to go
Financial limitations
False hopes and promises from the batterer/abuser
Self-blame

Think about how you can provide comfort and relief.
Listen and be available. But remember your friend is the one who needs to find the answers. It's important that you don't try to solve the problems or make the important decisions. An abused person has lost control and power and needs to regain it. It doesn't help if you become impatient, interfere with the recovery process, or take over. But you can help.

--help your friend identify the abuse for what it is; explain what you learned about the "cycle of violence"
see Project SURVIVE “Why victims stay” yellow hand-out

--help your friend get organized, i.e., make lists and prioritize needs

--check in to see that your friend is taking care of personal needs

--provide lists of safe places to go (shelters, family, etc.); see Project SURVIVE green resource sheet

--help your friend put together a SAFETY PLAN (a shelter or WOMAN, Inc. can also help)
packing a bag with clothes for self and children, important papers, & an extra set of keys
storing the bag at a friend or neighbor’s house or otherwise hiding it
saving a little money, if possible, hidden from partner or in a separate bank account
keeping the plan a secret from partner

--provide resources for legal, emotional, and economic support (see green resource sheet)

--offer safe touch (physical comfort and contact)

--encourage your friend to develop other friendships in addition to yours

--give resources to abusing partner if he/she is also your friend (see green resource sheet)

Rent a video about abusive relationships. Watch and discuss it with your friend.

What’s Love Got to Do With It
The Burning Bed
Once We Were Warriors

Enough
Sleeping with the Enemy
It Ain’t Love (for teen-agers)
Buy or borrow a book that offers options for getting out of an abusive relationship, and share it with your friend. Most of these books are available in the City College Women's Resource Center Library (SH 103; 415-239-3112). They primarily address female victims.

- Susan Brewster. *To Be an Anchor in the Storm: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women*
- Patricia Evans. *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*
- Ginny NiCarthy. *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life*
- Barrie Levy, ed. *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*
- Kerry Lobel, ed. *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering*
- Natalie Sokolof. *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*
- Evelyn C. White. *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse*
- Myrna Zambrano. *Mejor Sola Que Mal Acопañada: For the Latina in an Abusive Relationship/Para la Mujer Golpeada*
- Paul Kivel. *Men's Work*

**For gay men who are battered:**
- Paul Kivel. *Men's Work*

**For men who want to stop battering:**
- Barrie Levy, ed. *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*
- Kerry Lobel, ed. *Naming the Violence: Speaking Out About Lesbian Battering*
- Natalie Sokolof. *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings in Race, Class, and Gender*
- Evelyn C. White. *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women Dealing with Physical and Emotional Abuse*
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**Be careful.**
- Many times we can get drawn into the drama in a friend’s life and forget to take care of our own. Make sure you have your own support system.

- If you take over and try to control the situation, it might look like you're helping, but you're actually causing more harm. In the end, you will burn-out anyway and resent your friend. Make sure you know the difference between support and "fixing."

- Your friend's partner may see you as a troublemaker and begin directing anger at you. Make sure you have provided for your own safety.

- Your friend may not identify the situation as battery and may feel embarrassed or even threatened by your concern. Be patient. Remember the batterer will probably offer your friend false hope and promises, which you cannot supply. Be consistent and steady with your support, even if your friend becomes defensive or angry. Listen more. Talk less. If you believe your friend is in immediate physical danger, discuss available safety options.

*adapted from a hand-out by Maya Gillingham of The Sentences Project*  
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This diagram reflects the way many victims experience The Cycle of Violence in their relationship.

Not all abusive and violent relationships look like this. Some victims say they hardly remember a honeymoon or hearts and flowers stage. Others say the cycle feels "up-and-down" or "back-and-forth" rather than cyclical.

No matter how your friend describes the cycle, remember that it is difficult to escape from, so be patient as your friend finds a way out.