

Don't give up. Continue letting the victim know you will be there if they need you.

Feelings of anger are the natural reaction to a sense of helplessness and frustration. However, conveying anger or dissatisfaction to the victim by blaming or criticizing them will not bring the victim any closer to freedom. In fact, victims who sense that those who have supported them are disappointed in their behavior are very likely to withdraw, often turning to the abuser for support. This creates a situation, which increases the victim's isolation as the batterer plays up the idea that no one really understands their relationship. A "you and me against the world" attitude often develop while friends and family are painted as busybodies and know-it-alls.

Criticisms of the victim's actions become ammunition for the batterer in the efforts to turn the victim against her support system.

The abuser, if pushed too hard, can easily twist even good intentions.

SEEK HELP

Studies show that domestic violence homicides increase by 75% when a woman tries to leave or end an abusive relationship. Unfortunately, the reality is that domestic violence homicides often happen after leaving an abuser, so leaving doesn't always mean safety.

- ◆ **Trust her knowledge**—abusive acts of domestic violence are not random occurrences nor are they simply the result of one person's inability to control anger. When supporting a victim of domestic violence, it is important to remember that the abuser's actions are purposeful and have a specific goal—to control the victim. Victim's usually understand this and are aware that the abusers follow through on threats when they sense that their goal is threatened or has been thwarted. ***Trusting a victim's knowledge and understanding of the situation is critical not only for providing support, but also for maintaining safety.***
- ◆ If there is immediate danger, have her call 911 or arrange a signal with a neighbor or you to call 911.
- ◆ Have her call a local domestic violence program for help, advice and support from trained professionals.

Our Help Line is available to help you and the victim 24 hours a day, seven days a week!

(509) 684-6139 *Collect calls accepted*
Statewide Relay: **711** TTY / TDD

Or come in and talk with an advocate—Monday thru Friday 8 to 5 pm

Family Support Center

956 S. Main Street
Colville, WA 99114



Family Support Center

Program of Rural Resources

How to Help a Woman You Love

"She doesn't deserve to be abused."



24/7 Help Line (509) 684-6139



Domestic Violence can be as obvious as a beating or as subtle as a putdown. It can take many different forms—physical, emotional, sexual, and social—usually following a familiar pattern toward a common end: *control of one person by another.*

Domestic violence knows no boundaries and affects people from all ages, races, income levels, religions, cultures, and education levels.

Whether it leaves physical scars or emotional ones, domestic violence hurts. It hurts victims. It hurts families. It hurts communities.

Children who grow up in violent or abusive homes are more likely to become victims or abusers themselves.

FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence can take many forms and can happen occasionally or all the time. Examples of the different forms of domestic violence are outlined below.

- ◆ **Psychological and Emotional Abuse**
This is when she is told, for example, that she is ugly, fat, hopeless, stupid, a bad parent, etc. It can also occur if her partner emotionally blackmails her, by saying for example, “If you really love me you would...”
- ◆ **Social Abuse**
This is when she is not allowed to see the people she wants to see, or when she doesn’t see her family or friends because she decides it isn’t worth the argument.
- ◆ **Financial Abuse**
This is when she is not given enough money to feed and clothe herself or her children and/or for paying bills, but is expected to make ends meet. It is also when her partner forces her to hand over her money.
- ◆ **Physical Abuse**
This is when she is pushed, shoved, slapped, hit, punched, kicked or objects are used as weapons against her. This is the most obvious form of domestic violence.
- ◆ **Sexual Abuse**
This is when she is pressured or forced to participate in any sexual activity against her will.

Many family members become convinced that it is their responsibility to intervene by telling the victim what she ought to do. Familial bonds and a sense of loyalty make it difficult to resist the urge to “rescue”. It is also tempting to try to initiate a plan of action on behalf of the victim. It is not unusual for a family member to try to arrange for a shelter stay or other services without first consulting the victim. This often is done because of fear and the sense of urgency the family member feels. The desire to protect those we love is a natural instinct.

The urge to help can become counter-productive when it manifests itself as pressure, ultimatums, or acts of further control.

When we offer not support, but pre-arrange solutions or ideas about “what to do”, we are not offering options. Instead, we end up presenting to the victim a choice, where none of the courses of action is tolerable. By telling the victim what they ought to do, you force them to either let you down when they do not take advice or allow them to be controlled, once again, by someone else’s idea of how they should behave. Neither of these options fosters the empowerment the victim needs to make the choices that are best for them.

This is empowerment!

In making the commitment to support a victim of abuse, you make a commitment to withhold judgments and to let go of your own pre-conceived ideas about what is right for her. It is a difficult and a challenging commitment to make. ***But it is essential, because each victim of abuse must make her own decisions.***



It is partly by feeling the power the victim has when she chooses for herself, that she will find the will to become free. When we make the victim’s decisions for them, we deny the victim the experience of their own capacity for exerting power and gaining independence.

It is confusing when changes you are sure would be for the best, do not occur. It can be exasperating to watch someone forgive an abuser’s actions and continually return to the abuser. A reminder—often a victim of abuse does not understand the difference between forgiveness and trust. They may be able to forgive the abuse, but the abuser needs to be held accountable. ***Trust is not a gift...It must be earned.***

Continuing to offer support when the situation never seems to get better, often becomes extremely frustrating. Such frustration may cause friends and family to feel angry or fed up with the victim.

The role of a friend or family member is clearly more complex than that of an advocate. Nevertheless, the basic principles of advocacy are the same principles that work best to support those you love.

- ◆ **Offer Support**—find out if she wants to talk or share their feelings. Listen for denial or minimization of danger. Focus your concerns on his or her partner's specific behaviors that seem abusive, controlling, or violent. Name the abuse.
- ◆ **Understand**—Maintain respect for the fears, pressures, and needs that may hold the victim in the relationship. Recognize and respect that the victim may love or feel committed to her partner in spite of the abuse. It is not helpful to you or to the victim for you to judge her reasons for loving, leaving, or staying.
- ◆ **Provide Information**—Take some time to learn more about domestic violence yourself. Then, let the victim know where she can find help. Tell the victim about shelters, domestic violence Help Lines and support groups. Suggest reading materials like "Getting Free" by Ginny NiCarthy, and offer to let her leave those materials with you, if taking them home is not a safe option.
- ◆ **Focus on Safety**—Ask if you can help her plan ways to keep themselves and their children safe if her violent partner becomes physically, sexually, or emotionally violent. Remind the victim that domestic violence is a crime and that he or she can call the police.
- ◆ **Be Patient**—Remember that the victim's situation is not awful all the time. The victim may leave or reach out many times before deciding to leave permanently. Ending any relationship takes time; ending one where controlling behaviors are present takes even longer.
- ◆ **Acceptance**—Be prepared to respect where the victim is in the relationship. You do not have to like it, but criticizing her choices will only alienate them from you and increase the victim's sense of isolation. Let the victim identify her own timeline and focus. Trust that the victim can and should make her own decisions when she is ready and able to do so.
- ◆ **Take care of yourself**—Understand that it will be a painful experience for you as you watch the victim go through their own process of dealing with domestic violence. Supporting a loved one is exhausting, scary, and frustrating. Take time to recognize the affects on yourself. Call a domestic violence help line to receive support for your experience of the situation. Advocates expect to provide support to family and friends and are trained to help you work with feelings like anger, helplessness, and fear. Remember that you do not have to be the victim's only source of support. Encourage the victim to make use of domestic violence advocates.



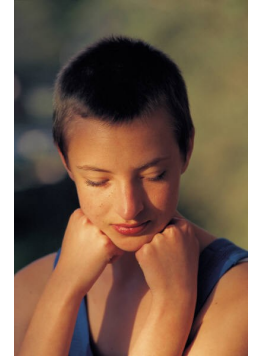
I am here for you...tell her that you will be there for her if and when she needs you. Tell her that the abuse is not her fault.

It can sometimes be difficult to tell if someone is in an abusive relationship. It can even be difficult for a victim to realize she is in an abusive relationship. Those who are abused, and those who abuse others, come in all personality types from all different backgrounds. Most people experiencing violence from someone close to them do not tell others about it.

So how do you know? The only way to know for sure is to ASK.

HERE ARE SOME SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

- ◆ **Verbal Abuse.**
He puts her down by calling her names, constantly criticizing her, provoking public or private humiliation, or making her feel crazy.
- ◆ **Bruises and Injuries.**
She often has bruises and injuries that she can't explain, or makes weak excuses for them.
- ◆ **Violent Temper.**
He has threatened to hurt her, her children, family members, friends or pets. He blames her and other people for everything, and gets angry in a way that scares her or other people.
- ◆ **Controlling Behavior.**
He checks up on her constantly by asking about her whereabouts, calling her at work all day, checking her car mileage, and listening to her phone calls. He manages all the finances and monitors her spending.
- ◆ **Extreme Jealousy.**
He acts jealous or possessive. He accuses her of flirting or having affairs.
- ◆ **Isolation.**
He tells her not to see certain friends or family members, keeps her away from school or work and makes her stay home when she wants to go out.
- ◆ **Emotional Changes.**
She seems to be on edge or fearful. She becomes quiet when her husband or boyfriend is around.
- ◆ **Behavior of the Children.**
The children frequently get into trouble at school or are quiet and withdrawn and don't get along with other children.



Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women—more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined.

Surgeon General of the United States—Report of 1996

Every 9 seconds in the U.S. a woman is assaulted or beaten.
Bureau of Justice Statistics, Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey, Aug 1998

A woman's reasons for staying in an abusive relationship are complex. Often there are many aspects to the relationship that do not allow the woman to leave. Most often, she is afraid and fears for the safety of herself and her children. Some reasons women don't leave:

- ◆ She fears she may lose custody of her children or cause emotional or physical harm to her children if she tries to leave.
- ◆ She may have no financial resources, access to alternative support, or skills to secure work.
- ◆ Her religious beliefs may stand in the way. If she leaves or divorces her partner, her religious community may not support her.
- ◆ Her friends and family may not support her leaving. Her partner may have convinced her friends and family that everything is good in their relationship, that any problems are her fault or "in her head."
- ◆ She may have grown up with violence—so she may consider her own relationship normal.
- ◆ She may not want the relationship to end. She loves her husband, boyfriend or significant other and she just wants the violence to end. She may believe that her love can change her husband, boyfriend or significant other's behavior.
- ◆ She may feel shame about being abused and reluctant to let anyone know that abuse is occurring in her relationship.
- ◆ She may not know who to turn to for help or where to get assistance.
- ◆ She may face language barriers seeking help or independence, and may fear deportation.

One of the tactics for maintaining control is the tactic of remorse. Abusers often become repentant and pleading during the periods that follow an episode of abuse. It is during this time that the abuser will demonstrate his "love" with cherished acts of kindness and concern.

The abuser may cry and say how much the victim means to him. Professions of love abound as well as promise to change—this time for good. For many victims, this period may constitute the majority of time in the relationship, making it all the harder for them to imagine permanently leaving. It is sometimes the case that except when things are bad, they are very good, or *seem* good.

Unfortunately, these "honeymoon" periods are as much a tactic of control as the abuse itself because they serve the same purpose—to control the victim and keep them in the relationship.

Fear and hope for change become a deadly and effective combination for ensuring that the abuser gains control.

"What can I do for a friend or family member who is being abused?"

The best thing you can do for someone who is a victim of domestic violence is to be supportive.

However, being supportive of someone you love who is experiencing abuse from a partner or ex-partner is no simple task. In fact, sometimes it can be impossible. Many of our most natural instincts work against us when we are confronted with the realities of domestic violence. It is the primary goal of this handout to show why this is so, and to suggest effective responses to the anger, frustration, and fear we feel when someone hurts those we love most.

When you come to the realization that someone you care about is being abused, you are likely to feel a great deal of concern for that person. You may even fear for their safety. The natural reaction is to want to help, guide, and lead the way out of the violent relationship. Perhaps, you may even feel an urgent need to rescue them from danger. Once abusive behavior has been identified, friends quickly recognize the need for change. What they may not recognize is the process for change and what their role in that process will actually be.



How to be a true support—5 Helpful Things to Say

1. I am afraid for your safety/life.
2. I am afraid for your children's safety/lives.
3. It will only get worse.
4. You deserve better.
5. I will be here for you when and if you ever need me.

If she is planning to leave, suggest that she put together and hide a suitcase of clothing, personal items, money, identification and social security cards, birth certificates, health insurance records, checkbooks, bank records and other important documents for herself and her children.