

5 Ways to Help a Friend Who's Experiencing Domestic Abuse



Everyone's situation is different – domestic abuse can happen to anyone and it's not their fault. And it can be difficult to know how to help a friend, coworker or loved one who is in an abusive relationship. Here are five simple things you can do to safely help someone you care about in their time of need.

1. Ask to connect

"How do you prefer we connect?"

Having a safe way to communicate is important. Let your friend or loved one tell you what is safest for them and honor that. Do not pressure the person to leave. Instead, support them without judgment. Offer to help them plan for their safety or seek outside support when they are ready.

2. Stay in touch

"Let's play a game online."

Finding creative reasons to call, text, video chat or use social media check-ins may provide a lifeline for those who feel unsafe at home. For example, some games have chat functions that may allow for communication in nontraditional spaces. Starting up a game that has chat may allow you to check in with your friend without making the abuser suspicious. There are privacy and safety tips for online gaming from the National Network to End Domestic Violence at <https://www.techsafety.org/onlinegaming>.

3. Support and believe

"I care about you and I'm here for you, no matter what."

Remind your friend that they are not alone and that you are there for them. If they choose to talk about the abuse, listen and show empathy. Let them know the abuse is not their fault and that you believe them. Ask what you can do to help.

4. Chat about options

"Let's create a safety plan."

Options are empowering. Talk to your friend about their options for seeking help or reporting domestic abuse in the military: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/family-life/preventing-abuse-neglect/domestic-abuse-military-reporting-options>. Let them know that domestic abuse victim advocates are available 24/7 to help them think through dangerous situations and create a safety plan: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/child-abuse-and-domestic-abuse/victim-advocate-locator>.

Create a secret code word, phrase or symbol that lets you know your friend is signaling for help, whether that means a call from you or for you to call the police. A call can sometimes disrupt abuse.

5. Share the hotline

"Here is the information for that restaurant I told you about."

It may be safer for your friend if you research support options for them — such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline at <https://www.thehotline.org> — on your device, provided you feel safe doing so. Use your agreed-upon code and a safe communication method when providing this information so it remains private between the two of you.

Resources and support to share

Immediate crisis support
National Domestic Violence Hotline
800-799-7233, 800-787-3224 en Español
<https://www.thehotline.org/>

Local support, 24/7
Domestic Abuse
Victim Advocate Locator
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/leaders-service-providers/child-abuse-and-domestic-abuse/victim-advocate-locator>

Support for teens
Love is Respect | Text "LOVEIS" to 866-331-9474
<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>

Installation support