

what is domestic violence?

Domestic violence occurs when one person in an intimate relationship physically, sexually, emotionally or verbally abuses the other partner. Abuse can occur between current or formerly married couples, dating partners or same-sex lovers. Anyone is capable of hurting the people they claim to love, and women as well as men can be violent. But in 95% of reported cases of domestic violence, the abuser is male and the victim is female. The abuse usually follows a pattern that may include physical assaults, name-calling, putdowns and threats to make the victim feel powerless, convince her that the abuse is her fault, and undermine her self-confidence.

how to recognize signs of abuse

For many reasons, it is often hard for a woman to acknowledge she is being abused by the man who is supposed to love her, but there are lots of ways you can tell if something is wrong. Maybe you've noticed that when your sister-friend and her husband or boyfriend are together, he acts controlling and puts her down in front of other people. He may complain about things she does or act extremely jealous of [] who pay attention to her, especially men. Or your sister-friend may become quiet when he is around and seem afraid of him. She may not be able to talk on the phone when he's around. She may also have visible bruises or other injuries. Maybe you know she is being hurt because she told you so herself.

how to approach women you think may be abused

"I'll never forget the moment my friend told me she was getting out of the relationship. That's when I realized that reaching out to a sister, no matter how uncomfortable it may be, could really make a difference."

- Kimberly, graduate student

If your friend, relative, neighbor or co-worker is being abused by her partner, she and her children need your support. Expressing concern for her well-being can help break through her shame and isolation and encourage her to seek assistance.

let her know you care

- ② Gently ask direct questions about her situation. If she's not ready to talk, try again later. Respect her right to privacy and never discuss what she tells you without her permission.
- ② Help her understand that she is not alone and that, unfortunately, thousands of other women like her also are victims of abuse.
- ② Listen - without judging. Ask what you can do to help. Don't rush into giving opinions.

- 🕒 Explain that the abuse is not her fault and that there's never an excuse for physical violence.
- 🕒 If you have ever been abused, share this experience with her. Let her know how hard it was for you to deal with the violence, and that you understand.
- 🕒 Let her know that domestic violence tends to get worse over time, and that it usually does not go away on its own.
- 🕒 Whatever happens, remain her friend and never give up on her.

raise awareness about domestic violence in your community

“When my brother told my husband, ‘You're not going to hit my sister anymore,’ it really gave me some power. That's when I stopped being afraid.” - Mona, domestic violence survivor

Taking a stand against domestic violence doesn't mean jumping into the middle of a fight. It means helping to create a community climate that refuses to tolerate domestic violence. It also means letting abuse victims know that we support them and that there are places they can turn to for help. Here are some ways you can do your part:

- Place the enclosed ***There's No Excuse for Domestic Violence*** bumper sticker on your car to tell our community that domestic violence is not okay. Ask your neighbors and friends to do the same.
- Wear ***There's No Excuse*** t-shirts when exercising, grocery shopping and running errands.
- Help break the silence surrounding domestic violence by talking about the problem with the people in your life. The next time someone mentions an incident, be sure to communicate that abuse is never acceptable and that it is harmful to our community.