

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT, A SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.

It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted, especially when that person is a family member, friend, or loved one.

Consider the following ways to show support:

- Listen. Be there. Communicate without judgment.
- If the survivor seeks medical attention or plans to report, offer to be there. Your presence can offer support.
- Share resources like the National Sexual Assault Hotline and online.rainn.org, but realize that only they can make the decision to use them.
- Be patient. Remember, there is no timetable for recovering from trauma. Avoid putting pressure on them.

Some Dos and Don'ts include:

- **DO** respect them.
- **DON'T** pity them.
- **DON'T** assume anything, allow them to make their own choices.
 - They have had their control taken away; try to avoid doing that again.
- **DO** comfort them. Bring them a blanket or cup of tea, make the environment comfortable.
- **DO** offer to accompany them, if they would like support.
- **DON'T** demand to know every detail of rape or assault.
- **DO** allow them to tell you as much or as little as they need to.
- **DO** remind them that what happened was not their fault.
- **DO** understand that healing takes time and is a difficult process.
- **DON'T** expect their fear to instantly disappear because they are safe when talking to you.
- **DON'T** make excuses for the perpetrator.
- **DO** recognize that every trauma is different and so is a person's reaction to it.

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673; local resources: <https://centers.rainn.org/>

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT, A SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC/DATING VIOLENCE.

Some DOs and DON'Ts:

- **DON'T** judge.
- **DON'T** tell them that they need to leave the relationship. Only they know when it is safest to leave, and that may not be now. Instead try to discuss a way to be as safe as possible in the situation.
- **DON'T** put them in a position where they need to defend the abuser.
- **DO** listen to them. They are risking a lot to tell someone, show them you can be trusted.
- **DON'T** assume that you know what abuse looks like. Abuse can take many forms.
- **DO** reassure them that this is not their fault, no one deserves abuse.
- **DO** tell your loved one they are not alone; you are there to help, or to help find others who can.
- **DO** use a code word with your loved one as a signal to call the police or any predetermined need.
- **DO** tell your loved one that you are there for them no matter what.
- **DO** offer them a safe place, if this is realistic, or help them find one.
- **It is OKAY** for you to let your loved one know your feelings/concerns.

There are some trends relevant to abusive relationships that it may be helpful for you to know:

- Even if the abuser apologizes, it does not mean they will stop abusing.
- Alcohol or drug use does not cause abuse.
- **Abuse is cyclical** and tends to escalate.
- If it is safe for you and nobody in your household will tell the abuser, offer to let them store some emergency items in your home in case they need to leave quickly.
 - **Emergency items can include:**
 - Documentation of the abuse (medical treatment records, the dates of the abuse, document any destroyed property with pictures w/ date and description).
 - Information about the abuser's car and workplace (for a restraining order).
 - Proof of finances (personal & joint bank accounts, credit card statements, insurance).
 - Emergency contacts and important numbers
 - An emergency supply prescriptions/medications and health records (for children).
 - Any information about firearms the abuser has access to.
- If children are involved:
 - They should consider working with domestic violence advocate/lawyer if they plan to leave with the children.
 - Someone should tell the children that abuse is wrong and that they should never get in the middle when abuse is taking place—they should go somewhere safe, and call the police if they can and tell the police: their name, address, and what is happening.

National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233); local program: [Domesticshelters.org]