



THEY ARE NOT ALONE

There are several organisations that they can contact if they want to get help:

National Domestic Violence Helpline run by Women's Aid and Refuge

0808 2000 247

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

There are also specialist helplines in Wales **0808 80 10 800**, Scotland **0800 027 1234** and Northern Ireland **0808 802 1414**

Men's Advice Line
(for abused men)

0808 801 0327
www.mensadvice.org.uk

Victim Support

0808 16 89 111
www.victimsupport.org.uk

If children are involved

If you are concerned about children as a result of the abuse, you can contact the child's school who can investigate safeguarding concerns, or call the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000**.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

HOW TO TALK AND OFFER HELP

If you suspect that someone may be in an abusive relationship, try to find a safe space to talk to them and let them know you are there for support.

Evidence shows that if you directly ask someone whether they are suffering from domestic abuse, rather than waiting for them to bring it up, they are more likely to speak out about it. And people are much more likely to confide in a friend, than the police or professionals.

Don't leave it to someone else to start the conversation – in a fifth of cases of domestic abuse last year, nobody else knew what was going on.

Always start the conversation face-to-face – if you try and have it over the phone or social media their partner may find the messages and retaliate against them or you. Make sure you won't be overheard or interrupted.

What to say?

Approach the conversation with kindness and concern. Many people struggle to identify with the labels of 'domestic abuse' or 'domestic violence' so avoid these.

To start off, try asking the person how things are in their relationship, or mention things you have noticed in their behaviour or the behaviour of the abuser. For example:

"We haven't seen much of you recently, is everything ok?"

"I've noticed you seem a bit down, has anyone upset you?"

"Wow, they text you a lot – do they do that all the time?"

If the person starts to talk about the abuse, DON'T:

- offer opinions about the relationship or the abuser
- criticise or blame the victim
- pass judgement on the situation
- offer advice – leave that to the experts. NEVER tell them to leave the relationship immediately, as this can be highly risky and there may be many reasons why they can't.

Instead, DO:

- let them know that you believe them and want to help
- reassure them that the abuse is not their fault
- thank them for their bravery in opening up to you, and
- let them know that help is available - make sure they know where to find the contact details of relevant support services and helplines.

Just by listening you will be helping the person to admit what is happening, and this will break the silence around the situation.

Ask them what they want to do, or have happen next, so that they feel in control of the situation.

If the person chooses not to say anything about the abuse, you must respect this too. Just let them know you're there if they do.

Ending an abusive relationship is a very difficult decision to make and the victim may take some time to decide to do this - and to work out how to do it safely. But they are the expert in their own experience, and they will know when the best time is to leave.

NEVER confront the abuser. Do not do anything that may endanger you, the victim or their children.



Once they've opened up....

If they are considering leaving the relationship:

1. Encourage them to pack an emergency bag containing money, passport etc and to hide this in a safe place in case they need to leave their house quickly.
2. Help them to work out a plan for leaving including who they can call and where they might go.
3. Agree a code word so they can signal to you if they are in danger or distressed and need you to access urgent help on their behalf.

If they have left the relationship, the person may need to change their contact details and think carefully about who they share them with.

Practical support

To help further, you could:

- Be with them when they contact support organisations or helplines
- Offer to go with them to appointments

- Help them to move to a safe place
- Let them stay at your home for a short time
- Look after their children so they have time to plan and seek help

What do you do if the victim confides in you about the abuse, but swears you to secrecy?

Ultimately, the victim has a much better chance of safety and independence if they are able to make decisions about what happens next. Although you mean well, reporting the abuse to the authorities on their behalf can be unsafe, disempowering for the victim, and lead to consequences that you cannot foresee.

Emphasise that you are not in a position to give them advice; only the experts can. Give them all the relevant numbers to call and offer to be there with them.

If you are worried about someone but don't know how best to help, call the National Domestic Violence Helpline yourself, on **0808 2000 247**, to ask for advice.

