

## WHAT TO SAY AND WHAT NOT TO SAY

- Start the conversation by saying **"I care about you,"** or "I am worried for your safety."
- **Point out specific behaviors** or incidents that concern you. For example, "I saw your partner grab your arm very hard and march you across the room."
- **Don't make blaming statements.** "Why don't you just leave?" or "I would never let someone put their hands on me."
- **Don't give advice.** Instead say "What do you think you should do?" or "You are the one who knows your situation best."
- **Don't tell others** what your friend or family member has told you unless you have permission. Instead encourage the victim to talk to others that may be able to help; advocates, neighbors, co-workers, faith leaders, other family and friends, etc.
- **Remain calm.** If you react strongly and insist that your friend or family member call the police immediately, for example, they may shut down.
- **Offer to help connect** them with resources; let them know that calling a domestic violence program (commonly referred to as a "shelter") does not mean they have to go to shelter or leave their partner immediately unless they choose to.
- Leaving an abusive relationship can be extremely dangerous. **Creating a safety plan with a domestic violence advocate is essential** to leaving an abusive relationship safely.
- This person may not be ready to leave the relationship. Say **"I will be here for you** even if I don't understand all of your decisions."
- **Do not push printed materials** on your friend or family member; these can be found by the abuser and can increase the victim's difficulty or danger.
- **Taking a non-judgemental position** as a reliable resource is your best defense against the abuser's efforts to separate your friend or family member from your support.

## WHO TO CONTACT DIRECTLY FOR HELP:

Although this brochure will get you on your way to becoming a supportive bystander, **it is not a substitute for talking with a domestic violence advocate** about any additional questions or concerns you have. Domestic violence advocates can be reached on **GA's 24-Hour Statewide Hotline 1-800-33-HAVEN (1-800-334-2836) V/TTY.**

**Remember to be careful.** Don't place yourself in a position where the person who is being abusive could harm or manipulate you. **Don't try to intervene directly** if you witness a person being assaulted. **Dial 911** instead.

For specific information on **how to support a teen or a young adult who is experiencing dating violence** please call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline: Call 1-866-331-9474 TTY 866-331-8453 or online chat [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org).

### Two recommended books:

To Be an Anchor in the Storm, 1997, by Susan Clark Brewster, and Family & Friends' Guide to Domestic Violence, 2003, by Elaine Weiss.



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# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What to do if  
**FRIENDS**  
or **FAMILY**  
members are  
being abused



## WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND HOW CAN FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS HELP?

**Domestic violence can happen to anyone** regardless of ethnicity, race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, education, or sexual orientation. Domestic violence includes physical violence, but it does not always leave bruises. It also includes things like name calling, put downs, extreme jealousy, controlling where the partner goes and who they talk to, not allowing that partner to spend time with friends and family, and controlling the finances. It includes making threats to the partner, children, pets, family, and friends..

**We often keep silent** because we don't want to intrude on someone's personal life, we fear we are wrong or we don't know what to say. Victims often say they kept silent because nobody asked them about the abuse.

**This brochure has information that can help you spot signs of abuse. It offers tips on how to support someone experiencing abuse.**

## HOW DO I RECOGNIZE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

### Does your friend or family member...

- Turn down social invitations or miss work or social engagements often?
- Seem more withdrawn or isolated or seem to have lost confidence?
- Become anxious or unusually quiet when their partner is around?
- Have unexplained injuries or injuries that do not fit the explanation for how they happened? Are they wearing unusually heavy make-up or covering up by dressing heavily for the season?
- Receive an unusually high number of calls or text messages from their partner? Does it seem as though they have to "check-in" with their partner?
- Seem sensitive about home life or do they hint about trouble at home?
- Have a partner who publicly degrades them or uses verbal put downs?

## SIGNS THAT COULD SIGNAL INCREASED DANGER

Research shows that these behaviors may indicate **a growing risk of danger**. If your friend or family member tells you these kinds of things are happening, encourage them to **contact a domestic violence advocate** to create a safety plan.

- Abuser has a weapon
- Victim is trying to end the relationship or take steps to gain independence (filing a protective order, "breaking-up")
- Abuser has threatened or attempted suicide
- History of abuse and/or abuse is getting worse or happening more often
- Abuser threatens to kill the victim
- Abuser is stalking victim, perhaps with repeated phone calls, emails, and/or texting, showing up unexpectedly where the victim is working or socializing, or seeming always to know the victim's whereabouts and what the victim has been doing.