

## HELPING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS BEING ABUSED

It is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, but remember that you cannot “rescue” them. Ultimately, the victim must make his or her own decision about whether or not to leave that relationship. But, there are some ways that you can help them find their own way to escape the abuse and become safe.

### What Do I Need to Know?

The serious and painful effects of domestic violence impact the victim’s desire and ability to end their relationship. They may have been told the abuse was their fault and they may feel responsible. Even though the relationship was abusive, they will probably feel sad and lonely when it is over. Because there are many complex reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships, they may break up with and go back to the abuser many times. Remember that it may be difficult for them to talk about the abuse.

### What Can I Do?

- Don’t be afraid to tell them that you are concerned for their safety and want to help.
- Acknowledge and validate their feelings about their relationship.
- Help them recognize that the abuse is not “normal” and not their fault, and that everyone deserves a healthy non-violent relationship.
- Be supportive and listen patiently.
- Focus on your friend or family member and what they need, not on the abuser. Even if your loved one stays with their abusive partner, it is important that they still feel comfortable talking to you about it.
- Be respectful of their decisions.
- Encourage them to do things with you and other friends and family members, and to take part in activities outside the relationship.
- Connect them to resources in their community (like Break the Cycle) that can help give them information and guidance as they move forward.
- Help them develop a plan to end their relationship safely.
- If they break up with the abuser, continue to be supportive of them once they are single.

**You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship..  
free from violence and free from fear.**