



Intimate Partner Violence:

What to Say When Someone is Being Hurt by Their Partner

“I’m sorry this has happened to you”

Acknowledge you have heard what they said, and that you are listening. Recognize the courage it takes to for them to share and the strength it takes to survive. This is your opportunity to show empathy.

“No one deserves to be abused”

This is a universal statement and an opportunity to connect with the survivor. Abusive partners often deny, minimize and blame their victims for the abuse, so hearing these words can be healing. Validate what has happened to them.

“It’s not your fault”

Don’t minimize the violence or blame the victim. The abusive partner is responsible for their own choices and behaviors.

“You are not alone”

Abuse is a widespread problem, yet victims often feel alone. Thank them for trusting you enough to share what’s going on, and let them know that others have been and are currently going through this. We can help the victim understand the abuse is not about who they are or what they did, but about their partner’s attempt to maintain control.

“There is help”

Let them know that there is free and confidential help available. All services at House of Ruth Maryland are offered in English and Spanish, and no identification is required. Offer the information, but let them decide when and if they reach out for help. It can be helpful to offer to call a hotline with them, but don’t force it. Let them decide how they want to proceed.

House of Ruth Maryland Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884) | www.hruth.org
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 | www.thehotline.org



Intimate Partner Violence: What Friends and Family Can Do

Become informed

Know programs and services in your area that help victims, and when a loved one asks for advice about what they should do, share the information you've gathered with them. Let them know they are not alone and that caring people are available to help. Encourage them to seek help from advocates at a local hotline or program, and ask if they would like to have you with them when they make the first call.

Be a friend

Letting your friend know you care and are willing to listen may be the best help you can offer. Don't push them to talk if they don't want to, but allow them to confide in you at their own pace. Focus on supporting their right to make their own choices and no matter what decisions they make, tell them you'll be there for them when they need you. Provide whatever you can: transportation, childcare, or financial assistance. Just going out and doing something fun might be what they need most.

If they decide to stay

You may find it difficult to support your friend if they remain in or return to an abusive relationship, but remember that leaving an abusive partner is difficult and your friend must make their own decisions about their life. Encourage them to develop a plan to protect themselves and their children. Help them think through the steps they should take if their partner becomes abusive again. Remind them that even a push or a shove can result in serious injury, so make a list of people they can call in an emergency. Suggest that they put together and hide a bag of important items, in case they have to leave in a hurry. For more details about creating a safety plan, call a hotline for support.

If they decide to leave

Calling a hotline is a good first start when planning to leave. Advocates can help them examine the resources and options available in the community. Abused people frequently face the most physical danger when they try to leave, so talk to intimate partner violence programs about the best way your friend can leave safely.

Get support for yourself, too

Being there for your friend can be stressful for you too, so take time to care for yourself. If you need help managing how you feel, reach out to an intimate partner violence agency for support and advice—help is not just for victims!

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24 Hour Hotline: 410-889-RUTH (7884) • Administrative Office: 410-889-0840 • Linea en Español: 410-889-7889 Oprima 8
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