

How to Help a Friend

If you know someone who is being abused, here's what you can do to help:

1. Be there. Listen without giving advice, unless it is asked for, and believe what he or she tells you.
2. Don't pressure your friend to break up with his or her partner and don't put the partner down. This may drive your friend away from you when s/he needs you most.
3. Acknowledge your friend's confused feelings. Don't tell your friend how s/he should feel. Recognize that it is still possible to love someone who hurts you.
4. Encourage your friend to get help. Offer to help him or her find a counselor that s/he can trust, and offer to go with him or her to meet the counselor.
5. Call a Domestic Violence hotline anonymously to find out what you can do to help your friend.
6. Get written information on relationship abuse and share it with your friend.
7. Don't make victim-blaming statements like "You're stupid to stay with him/her" or "Why do you let her/him treat you like this?" This will not help your friend.
8. Don't ever place conditions on support – let your friend know that you will support him or her no matter what his or her decisions are.
9. Allow your friend to make his or her own decision, and respect those decisions even if you do not agree with them.
10. Call the police if you witness physical violence.

If you know someone who is abusing a boyfriend or girlfriend, here's what you can do to help:

1. Tell your friend very clearly that his or her behavior isn't cool.
2. Don't laugh at jokes or make light of talk about abusive behavior.
3. If your friend grew up in a violent home, try to get him or her to talk about how that affected his or her own relationships.
4. Encourage your friend to get help. Offer to help him or her find a counselor s/he can trust, and offer to go with him or her to meet the counselor.
5. Be supportive of your friend's partner. Let him or her know s/he doesn't deserve to be abused.
6. Call a Domestic Violence hotline anonymously to find out what you can do to help your friend stop the abusive behavior, and what you can do to help your friend's partner.
7. Get written information on relationship abuse and share it with a friends and your friend's partner.
8. Be a role model for healthy relationships by treating your partner and friends with respect.
9. Speak up when peers make disrespectful remarks or sexist jokes.
10. Call the police if you witness physical violence. In many cases, an abuser can be required to get counseling.