

Berkeley

PATH to Care Center

PREVENTION | ADVOCACY | TRAINING | HEALING

How to Give Support: Intimate Partner Violence

If someone close to you has been impacted by intimate partner violence...

You don't have to be a professional to support a friend who has been impacted by relationship violence. We know that a survivor's community is an important part of healing from traumatic events. Below, you'll find some tools to help support someone who has experienced intimate partner violence.

What to Expect

It is not uncommon for people experiencing relationship violence to hesitate before leaving an abusive partner. Often, one person will manipulate a partner with isolation, giving or withholding affection, threats, including threats to "out" someone to family and friends, restricting access to necessary medical treatments or mobility, and/or guilt to exert power and control. Statistically, the most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is when the survivor attempts to leave, so it is important to have a safety plan and support system in place if the survivor chooses to leave. Some survivors of relationship violence liken the experience to being brainwashed, the following are some feelings a person impacted by relationship violence might experience:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Self-blame, guilt, shame● Extreme mood fluctuation● Easily becoming triggered or upset● Avoidant - never wanting to talk about it● Hypervigilance - feelings of fear and paranoia● Isolating oneself, denial, confusion● Distrust. Making excuses for abusive partner's behavior. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Anxious, crying or irritated without explanation● Hypoarousal - disassociated, emotionally numb● Depression - unable to get out of bed, complete routine tasks, etc.● Over-exertion - never slowing down, not taking time for one's self |
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How to Support

Be patient and communicate your unconditional support. A common abuse tactic is to isolate the survivor from friends and family so that they feel as if no one will be there to support them. Understand that abusers are often master manipulators and make the survivor feel guilty for leaving or reporting them. Often a support person can be impacted by the feelings of a person close to them. Remember not to neglect your own self care or take on more than you can handle while acting as a support person. It is healthy to set your own boundaries with time and emotional limits while providing care. Always reach out to the PATH to Care advocate team to access your own support as needed, and remember you don't have to be a superhero to support someone, being there for them is enough!

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DOS	DON'TS
Recognize that the most dangerous time for a person in an abusive relationship is when they attempt to leave	Guilt, admonish or blame someone who stays in an unhealthy relationship
Support and encourage the survivor to engage in activities outside the relationship	Take a “tough love” approach and cut off contact with the survivor if they do not choose to leave
Use apps like “myPlan” or the thehotline.org to help survivor develop a safety plan	Confront or encourage confrontation with the abuser
Familiarize yourself with confidential resources on and off campus	Neglect your own self-care or take on more than you can handle while acting as a support person

Resources:

The National Domestic Violence Hotline <https://www.thehotline.org/>

Types of Safety Planning <https://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/#types>

Safety Planning for college students https://www.loveisrespect.org/pdf/SafetyPlan_College_Students.pdf