

# Help a Friend



Watching a friend go through an abusive relationship can be very scary and you may feel like you're not sure how to help them. The decision to leave can only be made by the person experiencing the abuse, but there a lot of things you can do to help your friend stay safe.

## What Do I Need to Know?

If your friend or family member is undergoing the serious and painful effects of dating abuse, they may have a very different point of view than you. They may have heard the abuse was their fault and feel responsible. If they do choose to leave, they may feel sad and lonely when it's over, even though the relationship was abusive. They may get back together with their ex many times, even though you want them to stay apart. Remember that it may be difficult for your friend to even bring up a conversation about the abuse they're experiencing.

## What Can I Do?

- Don't be afraid to reach out to a friend who you think needs help. Tell them you're concerned for their safety and want to help.
- Be supportive and listen patiently. Acknowledge their feelings and be respectful of their decisions.
- Help your friend recognize that the abuse is not "normal" and is NOT their fault. Everyone deserves a healthy, non-violent relationship.
- Focus on your friend or family member, not the abusive partner. Even if your loved one stays with their partner, it's important they still feel comfortable talking to you about it.
- Connect your friend to resources in their community that can give them information and guidance. Remember, loveisrespect.org can help.
- Help them develop a safety plan.
- If they break up with the abusive partner, continue to be supportive after the relationship is over.
- Even when you feel like there's nothing you can do, don't forget that by being supportive and caring -- you're already doing a lot.
- Don't contact their abuser or publicly post negative things about them online. It'll only worsen the situation for your friend.

connect now!

chat at [loveisrespect.org](https://www.loveisrespect.org)

 text "loveis" to 22522

 call 1-866-331-9474

Discuss your options confidentially.  
Peer advocates are available 24/7.

For more information, visit [www.loveisrespect.org](https://www.loveisrespect.org)

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## But My Friend is the Abuser!

It is difficult to see someone you care about hurt others. You may not even want to admit that your friend, sister or son is abusive. But remember, when you remain silent or make excuses, you're encouraging their hurtful ways.

Ultimately, the abuser is the only person who can decide to change, but there are things you can do to encourage them to be better. It's not easy for abusive people to admit that their violent behavior is a choice and accept responsibility for it. They may benefit from having control over their partner and may turn to you to help justify the abuse. Do not support the abuse in any way. Remember, you're not turning against your friend or family member -- you're just helping them have a healthy relationship.

- Learn the warning signs of abuse so you can help your friend or family member recognize their unhealthy or abusive behaviors.
- Your friend may try to blame the victim for the abuse. Don't support these feelings or help justify the abuse.
- Help your abusive friend focus on the victim's feelings and the serious harm they're experiencing. Don't support your friend's efforts to minimize the severity of their behavior.
- Don't ignore abuse you see or hear about. Your silence helps the abusive person deny that their behavior is wrong.
- Convince your friend that getting professional help is important. Encourage him or her to find a program that can help and have a list of resources ready. Chat with a peer advocate for help.
- Stay in touch with your friend or family member about the abuse. Be there to support the abuser over the long-term.
- Remind them that change will create a better, healthier relationship for both partners.
- Set an example by having healthy relationships in your own life.

For more information, visit [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

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