

SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE & ABUSE DURING COVID-19

1 Create an atmosphere where someone can open up.

Consider using current events to open a conversation:

“I have been seeing in the media that DV rates are way up during isolation when victims are held up with their abusive partner. I sure hope that if I knew anyone in this situation they would reach out to me so I could support them. I was surprised to see how often this is happening and no one should go through this alone.”

2 Stay connected and provide openings on multiple occasions. Often, people will not disclose their experiences until they are provided many openings.

3 When someone discloses that they have been experiencing violence and abuse:

DO

- Believe the victim.
- Be compassionate (empathy not pity) and listen
“I’m sorry this is happening to you.”
- Let them lead the discussion.
- Notice and validate the things they have experienced.
- Be clear that the person who perpetrated abuse is the one who is responsible.
“You don’t deserve this.”
“It’s not your fault.”
- Notice the ways the victim has resisted the violence they have been experiencing and focus on the things that they have been doing to keep themselves safe.
“It sounds like you are doing the best you can in a difficult situation.”
- Challenge victim blaming messages.
- Allow them to judge their own choices and make their own decision. Offer support, not advice.
“I’m here to listen and will support your decisions.”
“What do you need right now?”
“How can I be helpful?”
- Always think safety: their safety and your safety.

DON'T

- Express disbelief or imply the victim is exaggerating or isn’t being truthful.
- Be judgemental or blame them for their situation or choices.
“It can’t be that bad.”
“Really? He seems like such a nice guy.”
“If that’s true, why are you still with him?”
“What do you do to make him so angry?”
- Tell them what they “have”, “should” or “need” to do.
“You need to leave them.”
“You have to call the police.”
“You need marriage counselling.”
- Push for more detail or information than the victim offers. You don’t need to investigate or know all the details to be supportive.