

HELPING A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER END ABUSE

It is difficult to see someone you care about hurt others. Remember that as a friend or family member your actions can make a difference. Ultimately, the abuser is the only person who can decide to change, but there are things you can do to encourage this change.

What Do I Need to Know?

When friends and family remain silent or excuse abuse, the abusive person is encouraged to continue the abuse. It may be hard to admit that your friend, sister, or son is abusive. But you may have the greatest ability to influence abuser to change.

It is not easy for abusers to admit that their abuse is a choice and accept responsibility for the abuse. The abuser 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, this does not mean you are turning against your friend or family member; you are helping him or her have the healthy relationship that he or she deserves.

What Can I Do?

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

You have the right to a safe and healthy relationship...

free from violence and free from fear.