



Support Ideas for Friends and Significant Others of Dating/Domestic Violence Victims

- Make sure the person is physically safe from immediate violence. Sit down and write out a safety plan in case of an emergency.
- Listen!
- Always try to remember that your friend is telling you out of trust and care for you. She/He is not telling you to hurt you.
- Memories of traumatic events or relationships in one's life will always be remembered, but an important factor in helping someone's healing processes is supportive friends and significant others. When anniversaries are approaching or when something in a present relationship reminds your friend of the past, listen and ask what you can do to provide support or help your friend through these difficult memories.
- People can heal from traumatic events, but the process takes a different amount of time for each person individually. Please continue to be supportive and try not to give up!
- Concerned people sometimes also need support for what they are hearing and learning. You can seek help from the STAR Central Office if you have questions or concerns about the situation.
- Start conversations, not interrogations. Open doors for communication with comments like "You look upset." You might not get a response right away, but keep asking. Your persistence will let your friend know that you notice and care about what happens to her/him.
- Be patient. Withdrawal from family and friends is a standard feature of young adulthood, but it can also be a sign of a violent relationship.
- Remind your friend that jealousy is not loving, it's controlling. Also remind your friend of the other warning signs of violent relationships.
- Trust your judgment. It's fine to say flat out, "I'm afraid for you. I think this person is dangerous."
- Take your friend seriously. Telling her/him that there are other "fish in the sea" or similar things does not acknowledge your friend's feelings.
- Giving support means listening, asking how you can help, encouraging your friend to ask for what she/he needs, being sensitive and patient, not trying to "fix" your friend, supporting your friend in order to allow her/him to regain control over her/his life, and not perpetuating the myths surrounding relationship violence.

- No one deserves to be verbally or physically abused. The victim/survivor is never responsible for the behavior of her/his partner or former partner who chose to hit and verbally assault another person as a means of exerting dominance and control.
- Pushing your friend to be intimate or “open up” emotionally too soon will slow down the healing process and may even damage your relationship. “Hurry up and get well” messages will force people to push down their feelings, internalize pain and anger, and create even more distance between victims and their friends and family.
- A disruption of routine produces anxiety. Be aware of this and prioritize things that need immediate attention and let things that can wait.
- Be sensitive in the way you ask questions about the current or past abusive relationship. “Why did he/she hit you?” sounds like victim blaming.
- Many victims blame themselves for the abuser’s behavior or for being unable to stop the abuse. Reassure your friend that she/he did the best they could in the situation, that she/he is a survivor, and that the abuser is the one responsible for his/her own behavior.
- Your own feelings, personality, or role with the victim may make it difficult for you to ask for help. It is important for you to talk about the abuse and its effect on you with a supportive person who understands relationship violence – a friend, relative, counselor, or teacher.

Information adapted from The Aurora Center of the University of Minnesota and
The Sexual Violence Center of Hennepin County

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