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## What Concerned Parents Can Do to Help Their Children in an Abusive Relationship

As a parent, you may be concerned if your child somehow ends up in an abusive relationship or is in danger. Here are some suggestions that may be useful.

- Say what you feel, lovingly.
- Be patient. Withdrawal from friends and family is a standard feature of early adulthood, but it can also be a sign of a violent relationship.
- Listen to your child. Do not scream or tell your child what she/he can and cannot do – that is exactly what the abuser is already doing to her/him.
- Set limits together and make a safety plan. Try to agree on safe circumstances under which your child can see the boyfriend/girlfriend so that she/he can judge the dating relationship her/himself.
- Even if your child denies being in danger, make sure that she/he knows what to do in an emergency. You may think that she/he is not listening, but a lot of information gets through.
- Tell your child that you will pick her/him up anywhere, anytime – no questions asked.
- Avoid making decisions for your child. Rather offer guidance in the decisions you approve of, and support the decisions that your child makes.
- Always be proud of your child and never be embarrassed. It is OK to be disappointed, but if your child knows you are embarrassed, she/he will be less likely to talk to you.
- Know that your child could experience dating violence, even if you have discussed the issue. Ask and listen regularly about any experience she/he may have had.
- Be aware of your own attitudes and biases about dating violence and its effects.
- Look at the library or online for reading materials on healthy relationships. Offer to read them with your child.
- Be familiar with the support services in your community.
- Look into mental health services for your child and your family if you believe it would be helpful.

Information adapted from The Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education of the University of Minnesota