

For Friends & Family

Supporting someone you're worried about

A free guide from Empowered Insights · empoweredinsights.co.uk · If you are in immediate danger call 999 · National Domestic Abuse Helpline 0808 2000 247

It can be incredibly difficult to watch someone you care about change. You may notice they seem withdrawn, anxious, isolated or less confident than they once were. They may cancel plans, make excuses for their partner's behaviour or seem frightened of making the "wrong" decision. If you're worried about someone, trust your instincts.

If someone tells you they're experiencing abuse

It takes enormous courage for someone to speak about abuse. Your response can have a lasting impact on whether they feel safe enough to seek further help.

Try to:

- Stay calm and listen without interrupting.
- Thank them for trusting you.
- Tell them you believe them.
- Reassure them that the abuse is not their fault.
- Ask what they need from you rather than assuming.
- Respect their choices, even if they're not ready to leave.

Avoid:

- Criticising or blaming their partner.
- Asking, "Why don't you just leave?"
- Telling them what they should do.
- Becoming frustrated if they stay or return to the relationship.
- Promising to keep secrets if you believe they or a child are at immediate risk of harm.

Leaving an abusive relationship can be one of the most dangerous times, so it's important that any decisions are made safely and with specialist support.

How you can help

You don't have to solve the situation. Simply being there can make a huge difference. You could:

- Keep in regular contact without pressure.
- Offer a safe space to talk.
- Help them access specialist domestic abuse services.
- Offer practical support such as childcare, transport or attending appointments if they ask.
- Encourage them to think about their safety without forcing decisions.
- Continue supporting them, even if they choose to stay.

Remember, abuse is about control. Giving someone back choice is one of the most supportive things you can do.

Keeping them safe

If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.

Avoid confronting the person causing harm or trying to intervene yourself, as this could increase the risk to everyone involved. If it is safe to do so, encourage your friend or family member to speak with a specialist domestic abuse service. They can offer confidential advice, safety planning and practical support tailored to their circumstances.

Looking after yourself

Supporting someone experiencing abuse can be emotionally challenging. It's natural to feel worried, frustrated or helpless.

Remember that you are not responsible for making decisions on their behalf. Your role is to listen, believe, support and encourage them to access specialist help when they are ready. It's okay to seek advice yourself from a domestic abuse organisation if you're unsure how best to help.

I'm here. I believe you. You don't have to go through this alone.