



ICADV MEDIA TOOLKIT

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: 101 UPDATED: 10 JAN 2012

Mission

The Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence seeks to engage all people in a movement to change the social and political systems that perpetuate violence against women. We do this through education, advocacy and quality victim services.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: 101

The following resource information can be incorporated into coverage of domestic violence:

What is Domestic Violence?

Warning signs of Domestic Violence

Suggestions for helping someone in an abusive relationship

Safety planning

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, threatening, and violent behaviors aimed at gaining power and control over an intimate partner. This includes name-calling, controlling who the partner talks to, using children as a weapon, and blaming. For examples of the tactics batterers use click [here](#).

Why do intimate partners hurt the person they care about?

Abusers abuse because they believe they have the right to, and because they can get away with it. They get what they want, when they want it. They get their way. They have learned that abuse works and that it's okay to treat a partner that way. They may have learned it watching their parents; they may have learned it in school, from friends, from the media, or from our history and culture.

There are angry people, hurt people, survivors of child abuse, alcoholics, people with mental illness, depressed people, combat veterans, stressed people, and people who had a terrible day at work who don't abuse their partners. Those are all just excuses.

Warning Signs of Domestic Violence

- Jealousy and Controlling Behavior
- Quick Involvement/Relationship gets really serious really fast
- Unrealistic Expectations
- Isolating the victim from friends/family
- Blames Others for Problems or Feelings
- Hypersensitivity
- Cruelty to Children/Cruelty to Animals
- Use of Force During Sex
- Verbal Abuse
- Rigid Sex Roles
- Past Battering
- Threats of Violence
- Breaking or Striking Objects
- Using Force During an Argument
- Controlling the Money In the Relationship

Suggestions for Helping Someone in an Abusive Relationship

Do you have a friend, family member, or someone you're worried about? Maybe you've noticed changes in his or her behavior. There are often obvious signs of intimate partner violence, and there's a lot you can do to help. Try to approach it in a sensitive and safety conscious way. Remember, people do not always trust that your assistance will be helpful and they may fear your involvement will make things worse.

Leaving an abusive relationship is the most dangerous time for a woman and her children. A domestic violence advocate can assist in developing a safety plan. If the person being abused will not talk with an advocate, consider getting resource information for them.

Above all, let the person know that they are not alone.

Here are some tips if you think someone you care about is being abused:

SPEAK UP - Don't be afraid to tell them you are concerned for their safety and want to help them in a way that they find safe and meaningful.

BE SENSITIVE - Acknowledge and try to be understanding of their feelings about their relationship -- remember, many people are in love with their abusers or fear that engaging in help seeking at that time could make things much worse.

Remember that they are the expert on their abuser and may not agree with your advice on what to do -- be respectful of their decisions and keep being there for them. It is a big decision to leave an abuser which often results a number of other significant losses for the victim. Only the victim can decide what is best for her and her family and will be required to live with the resulting outcomes.

LISTEN - Sometimes the most helpful thing is to just listen and be supportive. Let the victim know you're ready to help whenever she's ready.

BE THERE FOR THEM - Encourage them to do things with you, other friends, and family. Get them excited to do things outside of their relationship. An abuser often uses isolation as an effective tool in maintain control over the victim and limiting her access to help and information. It is important to find a way to remain in the victim's life in a safe and supportive way no matter how frightening it is or how frustrated you become.

CONNECT THEM TO RESOURCES - They may not even realize they are in an abusive relationship. Send them to a website like www.ICADV.org to get the facts. Public libraries also have helpful books on domestic violence. If it is not safe for her to have reading material at home, you can offer to keep the resources for her.

Help them develop a plan to be safer in the relationship or to end their relationship safely when they are ready.

STAY SUPPORTIVE - If they break up with the abuser, keep being supportive once they are single. Healing takes time, but maintaining healthy supportive relationships can aid in the process of healing from trauma.

WAYS TO BEGIN SUPPORTIVE CONVERSATION ABOUT THE ABUSE - It might feel awkward. If it is hard for you, imagine what it is like being the one who is abused. Here are some conversation starters:

- *"What's it like at home for you?"*
- *"Are you ever scared of your partner?"*
- *"How does your partner handle it when s/he doesn't get his/her way?"*
- *"Sometimes when people have injuries like yours it's because they were hurt by their partner. Is that happening to you?"*
- *"I believe you."*
- *"It's not your fault he treats you that way."*
- *"I know this is difficult to discuss, but please know you can talk to me about anything."*
- *"You are not alone. I care about you and am here for you, no matter what."*
- *"You are not responsible for his behavior."*
- *"No matter what you did, you do not deserve this."*

Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse while acknowledging that she is in a very difficult and dangerous situation.

Don't be afraid to tell her you're concerned for her safety.

"I see what is going on with you and _____, and I want to help."

"You don't deserve to be treated that way. Good husbands and partners don't say or do those kinds of things."

"The way he treats you is wrong. Men should never hit or threaten the women they love."

"I'm worried about your safety and am afraid he'll really hurt you next time."

"Promise me that if you need to talk, you'll come to me."

"It usually gets worse, not better."

Avoid confrontations or trying to "force" the victim on discloses details of the abuse. It's important to empower and support her.

Do not try to control or force her.

"I'm here to help and am always available, even if you don't want to talk about it."

"Remember, you're not alone - I am here for you when you're ready to talk about it."

Don't try to make any decisions for your friend or family member because it implies that you think she's incapable of making good choices for herself and it may deter her from confiding in you in the future.

Instead, focus on offering support and encouragement.

"I want to help. What can I do to support you?"

"How can I help protect your safety?"

Encourage her to get help. Help her look into available resources, such as the Iowa Domestic Violence Hotline number (800-942-0333) or a local domestic violence agency with specially-trained advocates to help her out of the situation.

Suggest ways she can get additional support.

"Here is the number to our local domestic violence agency. They can help provide shelter, counseling or support groups."

If applicable: *"They also offer services to help you understand the legal system, access community resources, relocate or get support for your children."*

"Let's develop a safety plan."

"If you need to go to the police, court, or a lawyer, I can go with you to offer support."

Here are some things to avoid saying. These sound victim-blaming.

"You shouldn't put up with this."

"Why don't you just leave him/her?"

"Why do you let him/her do this to you?"

"How did you get involved with someone like this?"

"What did you do to provoke it?"

"What could you do to stop your partner from abusing you?"

"He/she is a real jerk (loser, slime, etc.)"

"You should go to marriage counseling together."

If you are concerned about the safety of your friend or family member, we also recommend the book To Be an Anchor in the Storm: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women, by Susan Brewster.

Safety Planning

A safety plan is a tool that helps victims of domestic violence have a plan for what they can do if/when their abuser's violence escalates. Safety plans can be done confidentially, over the phone, 24 hours a day with a domestic violence advocate by calling the state domestic violence hotline at 1-800-942-0333/319-832-1490 (voice/TTY). See the lists below for examples of what's in a safety plan.

If you are living with an abuser...

1. Having important phone numbers nearby for you and your children. Numbers to have may include the police, hotlines, friends and the local domestic violence shelter.
2. Friends or neighbors who would be safe to tell about the abuse. Ask them to call the police if they hear angry or violent noises. If you have children, teach them how to dial 911. It is sometimes helpful to make up a code word or signal that you can use when you need help.
3. Avoid running to where the children are as they may be hurt as well.
4. How to get out of your home safely. Practice ways to get out. If you have children, they should also practice getting out of the home safely.
5. Avoiding places or rooms in your home where there are no exits (bathroom) and are weapons (kitchen). If you feel abuse is going to happen try to get to one of these safer places.
6. In an emergency could you grab the phone and lock yourself in the bathroom? Is there a safe closet?
7. Think about ways to get out of your house in an emergency. Can you make it easier to open or break the windows if you need to climb out? For example, rub a bar of dry bath soap on the runners so they slide better. Think about it as a fire drill.
8. Any weapons in the house? Think about ways that you could get them out of the house.
9. Learn about protection orders. Would they help?
10. Even if you do not plan to leave, think of where you could go. Think of how you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house - taking out the trash, walking the pet or going to the store. Put together a bag of things you use every day (see the checklist below). Hide it where it is easy for you to get. Some women put the bag, or things contained in the bag, in the trunk of the car making it appear as normal and random. You may want to leave the bag with a friend or family member.
11. Keep change with you at all times.
12. Hide a copy of your keys in case they are taken away from you.
13. Start attending a support group.
14. If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target. Get into a corner and curl into a ball. Protect your face with your arms around each side of your head, fingers intertwined.
15. Make a habit of backing the car into the driveway and keeping it fueled. Keep the driver's door unlocked but the other's locked. This will be helpful if a quick escape is necessary.
16. Try not to wear clothing such as scarves or jewelry that could be used to choke you.
17. Going over your safety plan often. If appropriate, make sure your children are aware of the parts of the plan affecting them.
18. Call a domestic violence program periodically to discuss your options and get support.

If you are leaving an abuser...

Take a look at everything on the "Living with an Abuser" list for ideas that may still be helpful. Research tells us that women are at increased risk while in the process of leaving an abusive relationship. Special care and consideration must be taken when leaving an abusive relationship.

1. Four places you could go if you leave your home.
2. People who might help you if you left. Think about people who will keep a bag for you. Think about people who might lend you money. Make plans for your pets. Help with childcare or transportation.
3. Keeping change for phone calls or getting a cell phone.
4. Opening a bank account or getting a credit card in your name.
5. Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.
6. How you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house at different time of the day - taking out the trash, walking the family pet, or going to the store. Practice how you would leave.
7. How you could take your children with you safely. There are times when taking your children with you may put all of your lives in danger. You need to protect yourself to be able to protect your children.
8. Putting together a bag of things you use every day. Hide it where it is easy for you to get.
9. Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures.
10. If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.
11. Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them, like a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.
12. Contact your local battered women's shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis.
13. Keep a journal of all violent incidences, noting dates, events and threats made, if possible.
14. Acquire job skills or take courses at a community college as you can.
15. You may request a police stand-by or escort while you leave

Review your safety plan often.

Items to Take If Possible:

Children (if it is safe)	Driver's license
Mortgage payment book, unpaid bills	Car registration
Keys to car, house, work	Bankbooks, credit cards
Passports, green cards, work permits	Extra clothes
PPO, divorce papers, custody orders	Lease/rental agreement
Important papers for you and your children	Welfare identification
Income Tax Returns and pay stubs	Money
Birth certificates	Insurance papers
Social security cards	Address book
School and medical records	Medicine
Items for your children (toys, blankets, etc.)	Pictures, jewelry, things that mean a lot to you

If you have left an abuser...

Take a look at the first two lists ("If you are living with an abuser" and "If you are leaving an abuser") for ideas that will still help.

It is important to remember that when abusers feel a loss of control over their partners, like she tries to leave the relationship, the abuse often gets worse. Take special care when you are leaving and even after you have left the abusive relationship.

1. Getting a cell phone. Your local domestic violence program or the local police department may be able to provide you with a cell phone that is programmed to only call 911.
2. Getting a protective order from the court. Keep a copy with you all the time. Consider giving a copy to the police, your child's caregiver, their schools and your employer.
3. Changing the locks. Consider putting in stronger doors, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, a security system and outside lights. Contact local community resources such as a domestic violence center or local church to seek assistance with these costs if needed.
4. Changing your phone number.
5. Make sure your smoke detector works.
6. Telling friends and neighbors that your abuser no longer lives with you. Ask them to call the police if they see your abuser near your home or children.
7. Telling someone at work about what has happened. Ask that person to screen your calls. If you have a protective order or a criminal no contact order that includes where you work, consider giving your employer a copy of it and a picture of the abuser. Think about and practice a safety plan for your workplace which includes going to and from work. Consider changing your hours or your route you take to work.
8. Consider renting a post office box or using the address of a friend or family member for your mail.
9. Reschedule appointments that the abuser is aware of.
10. Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new number.
11. Save and document all contacts, messages, injuries or other incidents involving the batterer.
12. Plan ahead for unexpected encounters at the grocery store, bank, parks, etc.
13. If you must meet your partner, consider doing it in a public place.
14. Not using the same stores or businesses that you did when you were with your abuser.
15. A safe way to speak with your abuser if you must.
16. Think about what you would do if your abuser moved back in.