

## How Can I Help?

Below are some suggestions and advice for how one can help a person involved in a domestic violence relationship. If a loved one is in immediate danger, please call 911.

- BELIEVE your friend.
  - Remind your friend that what is happening is NOT THEIR FAULT. There is no excuse for violence or abuse.
  - You may offer your friend suggestions, but not opinions. REMEMBER: you cannot make decisions for your friend, and it is important not to judge the decisions they make.
  - LISTEN to your friend and validate their feelings.
  - Remain PATIENT; your friend is going through a traumatic experience, and if they decide to leave it can take time.
  - Keep in mind confronting an abuser can be extremely RISKY; in fact, it may place your friend in greater danger. Fully assess the situation before trying to confront.
  - ENCOURAGE your friend to seek help. Provide local hotline numbers, resource lists, contacts and more. Ask your local coalition for information on domestic violence agencies in your area. Many have their own website.
  - Talk about SAFETY issues with your friend, involving areas in the house to be cautious of and a plan for quick escape if necessary. There are also many practical things a person can do that can be helpful, such as:
    - Providing childcare (babysitting) or play-dates
    - Cooking meals or shopping for groceries
    - Carpooling (to work, yoga class, the library)
    - Become a walking buddy
    - Join a book group or bible study together
- Find non-obtrusive and non-threatening ways to remove your friend and their children from the situation, without raising suspicions. This will allow your friend to talk, seek the help they need, and possibly provide a safe way of escape. It is also important to take care of yourself. Your friend can sense if you are experiencing heightened anxiety, anger, or other emotions. Find ways to keep yourself healthy, both emotionally and physically. You can only help your friend if you are functioning!!