

Tip Sheet

How to respond if someone tells you they are living with abuse during the pandemic.

Do

Believe them.

Tell them that you believe them.

Tell them it is not their fault.

Let them know that the abuse is not their fault in any way.

Ask them how you can help.

They might have immediate needs that need to be met, such as food security. Remember that the person who is living with abuse is the expert on their own life. They are in charge of deciding what steps to take next. Your job is to offer support and support their decisions.

Let them know about support services.

Let them know about support services that are available. Remember that not everyone will be/feel safe or comfortable with the police.

Don't

Don't ask them to "prove" it.

Don't blame them in any way or make excuses for the abuser.

Don't assume what they need without asking. Don't boss them around or try to control them. Do not go against their wishes or pressure them to leave the relationship.

Don't pressure or force them to use the support services. Don't pressure them to call the police.

Do

Consider the barriers they are facing.

The pandemic is not affecting everyone in the same way. They may be facing barriers related to their immigration status, economic status, housing, or (dis)ability. They may also be facing racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination.

Think about safety & risk.

Connect with resources & support services to get help with risk assessments & safety planning. Leaving an abusive relationship is a high risk time.

Communicate safely.

Ask them what the safest way to communicate with them is & how often to check in. Their abuser may have access to their device or be monitoring them. Consider establishing code words they can use if it is an emergency & they want you to call for help. In case of emergency, you will need their name & address in order to send emergency services there.

Get support for yourself.

Make sure you have your own support system. You can also reach out to support services in your area for help & advice.

Don't

Don't assume that all people living with abuse during the pandemic face the same kinds of barriers.

Don't provide un-informed advice or tell them to leave without a safety plan.

Don't send them online messages about the abuse unless you have confirmed that it is safe to do so (i.e. that their calls and devices are not monitored by the abuser).

Don't feel like you need to have all the answers.