

## How Can I Help a Friend or Client Who Is Experiencing Domestic Abuse?

Unless you are attempting to assist someone who has been very open about their experiences it may be difficult for you to acknowledge the problem directly. However there are some basic steps that you can take to assist a friend, relative, colleague, neighbour, client, or anyone else you know who confides in you that they are experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Approach her in an understanding, non-blaming way.**

Explain to her that she is not alone & that there are many women like her in the same situation. Acknowledge that it takes strength to trust someone enough to talk to them about experiencing abuse. Give her time to talk; don't push her to go into too much detail if she doesn't want to.

### **Acknowledge that she is in a scary, difficult situation.**

Tell her that no-one deserves to be threatened or beaten, despite what her abuser has told her. Nothing she can do or say can justify the abuser's behavior.

### **Support her as a friend, be a good listener.**

Encourage her to express her hurt & anger. Allow her to make her own decisions, even if it means that she isn't ready to leave the relationship. This is her decision.

### **Ask if she has suffered physical harm.**

Offer to go with her to the hospital if she needs to go. Help her to report the assault to the police if she chooses to do so.

### **Be ready to provide information.**

Be prepared in advance. Have to hand information on the help available to abused women & their children. Explore the available options with her. Go with her to visit a solicitor if she is ready to take that step.

### **Plan safe strategies for leaving an abusive relationship.**

Let her create the boundaries of what is safe and what is not safe; don't encourage her to follow any strategies that she is expressing doubt about.

### **Offer the use of your address &/or telephone number.**

So she has a safe contact site for the information & messages relating to her situation.