

fact sheet

How to Help a Victim of Intimate Partner Violence

In an emergency situation call the police.

If you suspect someone you know is a victim of intimate partner violence...

- You do not need to be certain that violence is happening to address it.
- Violence does not have to include physical violence to be serious and dangerous.
- Approach them when they are alone and it is safe for them to speak to you.
- Be sensitive, respectful and caring.
- Respect their decision if they do not want to talk about the violence.
- Contact police if you suspect a child is being abused or witnessing violence.
 - In Newfoundland and Labrador it is the law to immediately report suspected child abuse, including if the child is living in a situation where there is violence or a risk of violence.

Listen...

- Refrain from judgment.
- Take the issue seriously.
- Offer support.
- Ask how to be of help. Do not take over.
- Encourage them to understand they have a right to a life free from violence.
- Let them know you are worried about their safety and/or their children's safety.
- Help explore options:
 - Talk to them about how they can keep themselves and/or their children safe.
 - Let them know there is legal help available.
 - Let them know there are support services available.
- Even if you do not agree, you should respect their right to make their own decisions.
- Remind them it is dangerous to do nothing.

Avoid...

- **Blame**
 - Do not blame the victim for the violence.
 - It is not supportive to suggest they must have done something to cause the violence. Only the perpetrator is responsible.
- **Excuses**
 - Avoid blaming alcohol, drugs, or mental health issues.
 - The need for power and control causes violence. Violence is a choice and is preventable
- **Telling them what to do**
 - Give them information and support them in making their own choices and decisions.
 - This will help them regain self-confidence.
- **The abuser**
 - Do not confront the perpetrator about the violence.
 - Doing so may place you or the victim in danger.
- **Negative comments**
 - Do not make negative comments about the abusive person.
 - This may make the victim want to defend and make excuses for their partner.

It is important that you do not make the victim feel judged or criticized, or too afraid or ashamed to talk about the violence.

Sources:

Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2012). *Intimate partner violence and abuse – It can be stopped*. Retrieved from Royal Canadian Mounted Police website: http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cp-pc/pdfs/int_par-rel_int-eng.pdf

Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, (2014). *Support someone experiencing domestic and family violence*. Retrieved from Queensland Government website: <https://publications.qld.gov.au/storage/f/2014-09-17T23%3A24%3A56.252Z/dfvp-support-someone-brochure.pdf>