

RESPOND

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you are concerned that your friend is being abused, here are some ways that you can help.

What you decide to say or do will depend on the situation and there are lots of actions you can take that don't involve confrontation. Even a simple gesture can be powerful enough to show the person on the receiving end of the behaviour that they're not alone. Only step in when it is safe to do so! Avoid putting yourself at risk by always assessing the situation first and acting in a non-confrontational way.

- 
- ASK**
 - LISTEN**
 - SAY**
 - TELL**
 - STAND BESIDE**
 - GET HELP**
 - DOCUMENT**
 - CALL 000**
 - LOOK AFTER YOURSELF**

WHAT YOU COULD DO – A QUICK CHECKLIST

- ASK**
Are you ok?
- LISTEN**
Having a voice and being heard can be one of the most crucial steps toward change and healing.
- SAY SOMETHING**
Keep calm. Keep it simple. Try saying “I saw/heard/noticed ... and I am feeling worried about you”
- TELL SOMEONE**
Get support from people you trust.
- STAND BESIDE**
Go and sit or stand next to them and ask them: how can I help, would you like some help?
- GET HELP**
Have a support option ready: 1800RESPECT or ACON.
- DOCUMENT**
Suggest they keep evidence such as photographs of injuries, dated journal entries or screen shots of harassing messages. As a witness you too can record information for later.
- CALL THE POLICE**
If you think that you or somebody else may be in danger.
- LOOK AFTER YOURSELF**
See our next section:

HELPING A FRIEND

THINGS YOU CAN DO

If you know or suspect that a friend is being abused in their relationship, it may be difficult to know what to do. It can be very upsetting that someone is hurting a person you care about. There are things you can do to help make them safer.

WHAT'S GOING ON FOR YOUR FRIEND?

An abused person may be overwhelmed with an array of emotions: fear, regret, shame, embarrassment, confusion, anxiety, depression, hope, anger and a broken heart. They may:

- Believe that they are at fault and that by changing their behaviour the abuse will stop.
- Love their partner, but hate the violence.
- Live in hope that the partner's good side will reappear.
- Be dependent on their partner, socially, emotionally or financially.
- Find it hard to make decisions about the future.
- Have disconnected and seem to be feeling nothing or be in denial.
- Feel confusion and shame. For LGBTIQ people there may be extra layers of confusion and shame as domestic violence is most often referred to as an issue of 'men's violence against women' which does not translate into same-sex relationships or for trans and gender diverse people.

WHAT CAN YOU DO? (IMMEDIATELY)

If you witness something abusive you may feel safe and able to interrupt immediately. Remember safety is paramount! If you cannot guarantee the safety of yourself or others then now is not the time to intervene.

Here are some steps you can take in the moment you witness abuse when you feel safe to respond:

- DECIDE**
to do something not nothing. Even if it is just to bear witness to the situation and help when it is safer to do so.
- STAND**
with or sit beside the target
- CALL 000** immediately if someone is in danger
- SAY SOMETHING**
to the person who is using abuse if it is safe to do so. Remain calm and unaggressive and keep your message short and simple. Try saying: "Hey what you are doing/saying is not cool". Consider having a support person with you in case the situation escalates.
- INTERRUPT**
the situation by doing something unexpected
e.g. making a loud noise, 'accidentally' drop something, directly engage the abuser
e.g. ask them to go for a walk and come back in a minute

HELPING A FRIEND

WHAT CAN YOU DO? (LATER ON)

If you can't intervene in the moment, if a friend discloses abuse or if you suspect abuse you can make a difference by offering support to them afterwards and checking in with them.

- START A CONVERSATION**
Tell them what you've noticed and ask them if they feel safe and respected. For tips on what to say see our
- LISTEN**
for signs of abuse in what they are telling you. If they do disclose violence make them feel believed, reassure them that their feelings are valid
- IDENTIFY THE SIGNS OF ABUSE AND RED FLAGS**
Help them to recognise it – name it as abuse
- BE SENSITIVE**
understanding and non-judgmental. A victim might be afraid or have feelings of shame
- ASK YOUR FRIEND**
what they need from you right now: a place to stay, a lift to the police station or just an ear to listen
- COMFORT AND SUPPORT THEM**
A big warm hug can make a huge difference
- CHALLENGE MISPERCEPTIONS**
Remind them that they are in no way responsible for the abuse or violence against them. Let them know that abuse does happen in LGBTIQ relationships
- EMPOWER THEM TO MAKE CHOICES**
Avoid telling them what to do. Praise them for coping in such a difficult situation
- PROVIDE THEM INFORMATION**
for a DFV support line, emergency service or for a specialist LGBTIQ service. Encourage them to seek specialist support or advice. Offer to drive them to an appointment. Link
- CHECK IN**
after initial conversations and let them know you still care. They may not be ready to take on your support and act straight away, but let them know you're around when they are ready and give them space if they ask for it
- DON'T GIVE UP**
on them as a friend even if they choose to stay in the relationship

THEY ARE NOT AT FAULT!

Remind them that they are in no way responsible for the abuse or violence against them. Let them know that abuse does happen in LGBTIQ relationships

HELPING A FRIEND

HOW CAN YOU HELP KEEP THEM SAFE?

Depending on the level of abuse in the relationship, you may need to talk to your friend about how they can be safer. Keep in mind that violence often increases when someone tries to confront or leave their abuser and it may be hard for them to decide on what to do.

A PROFESSIONAL CAN HELP YOUR FRIEND DEVELOP A SAFETY PLAN. HOWEVER IF YOU THINK YOUR FRIEND NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT THEIR SAFETY STRAIGHT AWAY TALK TO THEM ABOUT THESE THINGS:

- Ask your friend when/where the abuse is most likely to occur. For example is it after their partner has been drinking?
- Ask your friend how they have managed to stay safe so far. They most likely have adopted coping strategies already. Check in to see how effective these are.
- Perhaps suggest a code word that is only known to you both so they can signal when they are in danger, along with an action plan if that code word is used (e.g. then I will call police or come to your house)
- Let them lead their own planning and be guided by what they want to do.
- Offer to keep spare sets of keys, money, important documents, or a bag of their clothes in a safe place in case they need to access them quickly in an emergency.
- Let them know you'll be there no matter what their decision is. If they decide to stay with their partner keep the communication lines open.

A PROFESSIONAL CAN HELP!

Support services can help your friend think about actions they can take when they feel unsafe. Contacting a professional to make a safety plan is advised if you or someone you know is living with domestic or family violence.

Staying safe does not mean the victim must change their behaviour so that their abuser doesn't get angry. The victim is never responsible for the other person's violence.

HELPING A FRIEND

WHO IS A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT:

Telling someone you have been raped or sexually assaulted is one of the hardest things to do. Hearing about it is also very difficult and it's normal to feel unsure about what to do

WHAT CAN YOU DO ?

- RESIST ASKING DETAILS**
of the assault because they might not feel ready to talk about it. Probing for details could re-traumatise them. Ask only what is necessary to get them the help they need.

If they are struggling to talk, you could suggest that they write it down.
- REASSURE**
them that rape and sexual assault is NEVER the fault of the victim regardless of the situation it happened in. Tell them that you are there to support them.
- BE PATIENT**
as only they know how they feel, so it's important that you let them recover at their own pace.
- RESPECT**
their decisions and allow them to regain a sense of control of their life.
- SUGGEST MEDICAL HELP**
if the assault was recent and ask them if you can phone the police. Be guided by them and only call the police with their consent.
- BE CONSISTENT**
and keep checking in. Give them space if they ask for it.
- STAY WITH THEM**
if you can, go with them to the police or hospital to get help and make a report.

THERE IS NO 'NORMAL' RESPONSE TO RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT.

When someone discloses rape or sexual assault they could be telling you directly after the experience or it may have taken them days, weeks, months or even years to feel able to talk to about it.

HELPING A FRIEND

THINGS TO AVOID DOING FOR A FRIEND WHO IS A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Witnessing or hearing about abuse or sexual assault, especially if it is about someone we love, can bring up a lot of emotions. Sometimes bystanders say or do something that can cause further harm to the situation, even if they thought they were helping. Here are some suggestions for ways that you can avoid further fallout or danger or stress for everyone involved.

TRY TO AVOID :

Whether you are supporting a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault OR the perpetrators of either, here are some things you should not do:

☒ **MINIMISING THE ABUSE**

Chances are that minimising abuse is how the abuser has been getting away with it already. What you are being told is just a fraction of what is actually occurring

☒ **TELLING THE ABUSER**

that the victim has said or done anything that alerted you. Instead tell them you noticed on your own otherwise you can put their target at greater risk.

☒ **ASSUMING THAT YOU KNOW WHAT'S BEST**

Being abused or assaulted is already a disempowering experience. Telling a victim what to do can make the person feel even more powerless. Re-empowering a victim to make their own choices is different to telling them what you think they 'should' or 'shouldn't' do.

☒ **GANGING UP ON SOMEONE**

Gathering a support network to intervene is different to ganging up on someone. Ganging up is threatening and can make a situation worse.

☒ **TELLING A VICTIM TO LEAVE**

or criticise them for staying. Although you may want them to leave, it is more helpful to support the person to make that decision in their own time and respect that they may decide not to leave. It is important to note that violence usually increases when a victim tries to leave or the abuser thinks that they are planning to do so.

☒ **POSTING ONLINE**

about someone else's experience. There are several reasons for this: It can lead to further victimisation by the abuser or through people's comments; the abused person may feel exposed by the detail of their life being made public, even if you don't use names; and publicising another person's traumatic experience can be triggering for other people to read. Once something is on the internet you have no control over who reads it. You may put the abused person at risk of being found by the abuser through cyber stalking you or the victim

☒ **ENGAGEING IN DEBATE**

or an argument, as this is how situations can escalate. If the harasser responds in an angry or defensive way, try your best to assist the person who was targeted instead of engaging with the harasser.

☒ **VICTIM BLAMING**

It is unhelpful to ask questions that suggest that the abuse is the victim's fault. Questions like: 'what did you do to provoke them?'; 'how much did you drink?'; 'Why didn't you do...?' 'You should have ...' are never voiced.

HELPING A FRIEND

CONFRONTING AN ABUSER THAT YOU KNOW.

With intimate partner violence, family violence & sexual assault being so prevalent in our society, there is a chance that you will know or come across someone who uses abuse. There are times when it is safe and appropriate for you to confront an abuser. This information is to help you if you are aware one of your friends uses abusive behaviours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Standing up to an abuser can make them think twice about what they're saying or doing. But often people don't stand up because they fear becoming the target of abuse themselves, ruining their relationship with the abuser or 'getting it wrong'.

In small communities like the LGBTIQ community there can be extra pressures around anonymity and confidentiality and not wanting to pathologise the community further.

There are several ways that you can confront a person who uses abuse. Remember safety is paramount! If you are worried about the safety of yourself or others then now is not the time to confront someone who uses abuse.

Here are some steps you can take if you witness abuse:

- Interrupting or distracting the abuser
- Tell the abuser that you find the behaviour upsetting
- Calling the behaviour out as abusive
- Recording the incident or other evidence on your phone
- If you don't feel comfortable saying something, use body language to show them that you don't like their behaviour (e.g. a stern look or a shake of your head)
- There is power in numbers, ask someone with you to help respond
- If the abuse is severe or anyone is in danger call 000

Here are some steps you can take if you know that someone is using abuse and if you know the abuser.

- If possible have a conversation with an abuser in a safe place where you can both talk freely and privately. Try a quiet corner in a café or go to a park. If it is clear they are not receptive, have an exit plan to end and leave the conversation
- Speak to them about their recent disrespectful behaviour (see suggested script [HERE](#))
- Call out disrespectful language or behaviour e.g. challenging their negative comments about their partner
- Challenge any rigid attitudes they have to relationships, e.g. that a partner should behave in a certain way

HELPING A FRIEND

STARTING A CONVERSATION

Knowing what to say can be one of the biggest hurdles to get over. This section has some suggestions for starting a conversation, with a printable script to help you get started.

WHAT TO SAY

TO SOMEONE WHO IS BEING/HAS BEEN ABUSED:

Start off by showing them that you are taking the situation very seriously:

“I’d really like to have a chat with you, somewhere out of the earshot of others”.

Tell them why you are concerned and what you have noticed:

“I’ve noticed that you seem [e.g. scared, anxious, not your old self] around your partner”

Name it as abuse:

“I’m worried you’re in an abusive relationship and I am worried about you”.

Give them a chance to tell you what is happening but bear in mind that they may not be ready to talk about it.

Offer help but leave any decisions up to them:

“How can I help?”

TO AN ABUSER WHO IS A FRIEND:

Start a conversation off as caring and non-critical:

“We’re friends, right... well as your friend I’d like to say that I’m concerned by some things I have noticed”

Give reasons why you are concerned, focus on the acts of the abuser and nothing that the target did to alert you:

“I have noticed that you said/did...”

Tell them how you feel about it:

“I am worried for you both, especially for [name the target of abuse]. I don’t want to see anyone hurt”

“I wouldn’t want to see anyone saying/doing that to you”

Raise potential consequences:

“If you don’t get help to change you could cause more harm to yourself, [name the victim and any children involved]”

Check in that they understand:

“What do you think and feel about what I am saying?”

Support them to change:

“Have you thought about getting professional help to change some of your behaviours?”

HELPING A FRIEND

A SIMPLER SCRIPT VERSION:

If the person you are confronting is acting defensively, using 'I' statements this may be able to reduce defensiveness.

HOW TO SAY IT:

- Call on a friend or someone you trust to help you talk openly with the abuser
- Avoid confronting them with aggression; it will only make the situation work
- Try to talk to the abuser about patterns of behaviour. Use several examples to explain these patterns
- Be a good listener and give respectful attention. Do not be antagonistic
- Be honest and direct whenever possible
- Set boundaries — do not make excuses for them or agree with theirs. The abuser is responsible for the abuse
- Be aware that abusers will attempt to enlist you as their supporter through highlighting the faults of their partner and minimizing their own actions

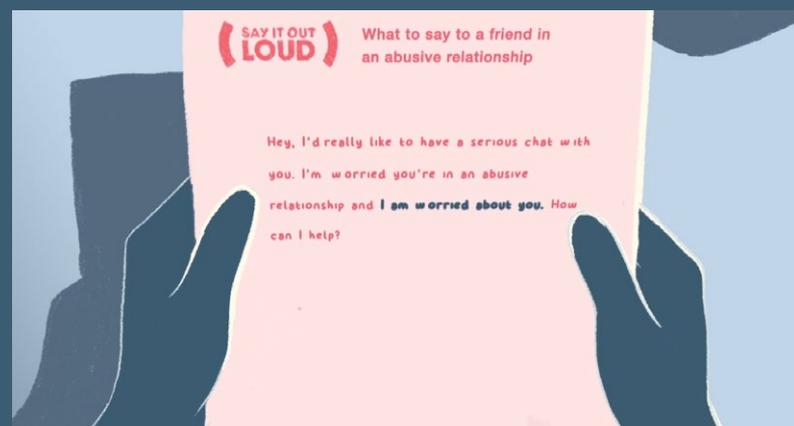
A SIMPLER VERSION:

When I...
I feel...
I would like...

EXAMPLES:

“When I see Sam being spoken down to, I feel worried for them. I would like you to see a professional so that you can get help to stop?”

“When I see Sam getting hurt I feel scared for their safety. I would like Sam to feel safe at home. I think seeing a professional can help you to stop hurting Sam. What do you think about what I’m saying?”



HELPING A FRIEND

LIKELY REACTIONS

If you are unsure if the reaction could get violent, confront the abuser in a public place and bring a friend as a witness and to support you.

The most likely reactions that you will get when confronting a perpetrator of abuse are:

- Denial: “I have no idea what you’re talking about, it simply isn’t true”
- Minimisation: “You’re making it sound much worse than it actually is”
- Blame the victim: “They make me get angry and worked up”
- Attack the victim’s credibility: “You know that they lie all the time”
- They may not see their actions as violent: “It’s not abuse it’s just normal for a relationship”
- Assume the victim role: “They are the one attacking me” or “I’ve had a hard life”
- Claim to be misunderstood: “I only do it because I care about them, and they were way out of line”
- Partial admission of guilt: “Once or twice I may have taken it too far”
- Claim to not remember an incident: “I was drunk I don’t remember anything”
- They may try to get you to doubt your own evaluations of the abuse and lead you to feel confused about what you saw/know: “When I said that I was only joking”
- They may get defensive, angry or emotional.

The best way to work with these negative and unhelpful reactions is to stay calm, keep consistent with your messaging, use as many solid examples as you can and sound as supportive and non-attacking as possible.

For example:

“I hear what you are saying, I don’t know all the details but I did see you get very angry the other day and I am concerned for the safety in your relationship, I think there is no harm in you talking to a professional so that these fights can stop”.



GETTING HELP

Doing it alone is hard! Where possible, everyone involved should get help from others. Here are some useful support options.



CALL ON A FRIEND

Knowing that a friend has your back can make the world of difference. Just make sure that it is a friend you can trust and preferably one who can keep their cool in a tough situation. Having a friend go with you to see police or a support service can make the difference between it being a positive experience or not.

GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

Here are some numbers for services that can help you:

ACON | 1800 063 060

ACON is a NSW based LGBTIQ health organisation with offices in Sydney, Newcastle and Lismore. ACON has counsellors and the Sydney office has a dedicated domestic and family violence case manager who can take calls from across NSW and help you find the right support for you in your area.

Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia (RDVSA) | 1800 424 017

RDVSA provides 24/7 telephone and online crisis counselling for anyone – of all genders – in Australia who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault, family or domestic violence and their non-offending supporters.

1800RESPECT | 1800 737 732

National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling and information referral service, available 24 hours a day, year round.

QLife | 1800 184 527

QLife national telephone and web counselling service for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) people, families and friends. Open from 3pm to midnight in your state or territory, every day.

REPORTING THE INCIDENT TO POLICE

For urgent assistance, when abuse is occurring or when you are afraid it is about to happen, call for police and/or an ambulance on 000.

If it is not an emergency situation, and you or someone involved would like to make a report, call or go into your local police station. For a list of police stations go to the police website: <http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/>

Ask to speak to a domestic violence liaison officer (DVLO). DVLO's are in most police stations in NSW, just ask for one when you contact police.

A DVLO will:

Investigate the situation, give you information about the Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) process and support you through the court process.

You could also ask for assistance from an LGBTIQ liaison officer (GLLO). GLLO's are not at every police station, but you can ask for the nearest GLLO at your local station.

You can contact Crime Stoppers with information about domestic-violence/sexual assault crimes: 1800 333 000 via the reporting page: <https://nsw.crimestoppers.com.au/>

Information you provide will be kept confidential.