

RECOVER

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF:

Abuse is upsetting. After witnessing or hearing about abuse you may be struggling to cope with what has happened and how you're feeling. You may feel sad, angry or helpless. If this is the case, it's important that you seek help for yourself.



SELF-CARE

Taking care of yourself (or self-care) is a good daily habit to get into, but it is especially important during times of stress or heavy emotions.

- Engage in an activity**
that you enjoy and find relaxing, such as going for a walk, gardening, listening to music or reading.
- Do something good for your body**
like exercising, meditation, a massage, sleeping or eating something healthy (and tasty!)
- Connect with friends, family or pets**
Don't be afraid to ask them for some extra support.
- Be kind to yourself**
Generally try to be kind to yourself. Don't have too high expectations of yourself and give yourself the positive feedback you'd give a friend during this time.

YOU MAY NEED TO LET GO SO THAT THEY CAN MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, OR SO THAT YOU CAN MOVE ON FROM ANY STRESS THAT IT IS CAUSING YOU.

VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Even when we haven't experienced trauma directly it can still affect us. This is especially true when a person close to us, tells us about their trauma, it can creep up on us when we're trying to understand and support them. It is important to pay attention to how you are feeling. Look for signs of stress in yourself: increased heart rate or breathing, tension in the body, moodiness, changes in eating and sleeping habits, bad dreams, imagining what they have told you in your own mind, not being able to think clearly or only thinking about the situation.

GETTING TRIGGERED

If you have experienced trauma in your past, knowing about someone else's trauma can trigger memories for you. Reach out for help and support for yourself, with loved ones and with a professional counsellor or psychologist.

LETTING GO

At the end of the day you can do your best to help your friend/loved one but it is their life so there may come a time when you need to let go.

You may need to let go so that they can make their own decisions, or so that you can move on from any stress that it is causing you. 'Letting go' simply means allowing there to be enough space for you both to live your life.

You may say to yourself that you will prioritise your own relationship, family and work but will help your friend as much as possible outside of that time. Communicate your boundaries with others, be clear about what you can and can't offer and don't make promises you can't keep.

SETTING BOUNDARIES

PUTTING IN BOUNDARIES AND TAKING TIME OUT

It may be hard not to get too involved in an abusive situation, especially when it's someone you care about. Giving too much of yourself can lead to stress and anxiety, resentment, depression, and health issues. Set limits for what you reasonably can and can't do to help your friend and stick to them.

WHAT TO DO IF INTERVENING DOES NOT GO TO PLAN

It is hard to see someone suffer and feel helpless about it. It is especially hard if you see a solution to a problem that another person does not see or won't take.

They may need to make decisions at their own pace; they may act in the future or not at all. There are often more reasons for someone to stay in an abusive relationship than not. Some people stay due to financial or emotional security, due to a lack of belief in themselves, because they believe that it is better for their children or pets, because their culture or family won't support a decision to leave, or because they love their partner and still hold onto hope that the abuse will end or that the relationship will get better.

Whatever the reason for their choice remember that it is their choice. However you needn't feel totally helpless. Try taking a break from the situation for a while and check back in later. Try going back through the RESPOND section of the toolkit and try something a little differently.

TRY TAKING A BREAK FROM THE SITUATION FOR A WHILE AND CHECK BACK IN LATER.

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

Try to be patient

It can take time for someone to recognise they are being abused or that their actions are harmful to others. It can take even longer to be able to make safe and permanent decisions to change their situation.

Even if your friend doesn't act right away, you can congratulate yourself for helping them recognise the problem. Recognition is a powerful first step to changing.

If your friend wants to leave or get help but can't yet, try to help them navigate any obstacles that are stopping them. Maybe you need to help them find a safe place to stay, help them save money and literally escort them to see support.

Focus on being supportive

Help build their self-confidence. Show them hope that things can change.

Help them maintain contacts

People in abusive relationships are often very isolated – help them to develop or to maintain contacts outside of their abusive relationship.

Stay Strong

So that your able to help in the future

REPAIRING THE FRIENDSHIP

There are various reasons why your friendship may suffer as a result of you trying to help

REASONS WHY YOUR FRIENDSHIP MAY SUFFER

Maybe the person involved in the abusive relationship felt embarrassed or ashamed of the abuse and as a result of you noticing and saying something they got defensive.

Maybe they wanted to keep it a secret and they are angry that you found out.

Maybe when you tried to intervene an argument started and things were said that were hurtful. Maybe they felt targeted or attacked.

In almost all situations involving abuse there is sure to be a lot of emotions, and emotions can lead to defensiveness, anger and misunderstandings.

When this happens, resentment grows, and the friendship suffers. There is a chance that people involved aren't saying everything that needs to be said, and aren't able to express what is honestly going on for them.

In order to restore the friendship, each person needs to really try to understand where the other person is coming from, their feelings and motivations. The main issue might be a lack of communication.

- 1. Give them space**
if either of you need it. Especially if you think that remaining involved might be dangerous to anyone's safety.
- 2. Have a conversation**
Open the lines of communication by telling them that you want to fix the friendship. Tell them that you think you need to talk about what happened.
- 3. Be open**
Don't assume you know their side of the story, what they say or what the outcome will be.
- 4. Apologise**
Own up to any of your actions that may have had an adverse effect on them or the friendship.
- 5. Listen**
to their side of the story, don't interrupt them, truly listen and make them feel heard.
- 6. Share your side of the story**
including your motivations for acting.

Know that you can't control them, the friendship or the situation. Do your best, meet them half way and then be patient.