

What You Can Do For A Friend Who is Being Abused



Become Informed

Find out all the facts you can about domestic violence. Call the local program(s) in your area that assist battered women and their children. The following are two good books to get you started. You can also call the statewide toll-free Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-838-8238.

- Jones, Ann and Susan Schecter, When Love Goes Wrong: What to Do When You Can't Do Anything Right, New York: Harper Perennial, 1989.
- Deltufo, Alisa. Domestic Violence For Beginners, New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., 1995.

Lend An Ear

Letting your friend know that you care and are willing to listen may be the best help you can offer. Don't force the issue, but allow her to confide in you at her own pace. Never blame her for what's happening. Remember that your friend must make her own decisions about her life. Focus on supporting her right to make her own decisions.

Share Community Services

When she asks for advice on what she should do, share the information you've gathered with her privately. Encourage her to seek help from a local battered women's shelter. Many battered women first talk to marriage counselors, psychiatrists, or members of the clergy. However, not all professionals can provide the help needed by abused women.

Focus on Her Strengths

Battered women live with verbal as well as physical abuse. Your friend is probably told over and over by the abuser that she is a bad person, a bad wife, or a bad mother. Without positive feedback from outside the home, she may begin to think that she can't do anything right and that something is wrong with her. Give her the emotional support she needs to believe that she is a good person. Help her examine her strengths and skills. Emphasize that she deserves a life that is free from violence.

If She Decides to Leave

Help your friend make a plan to be safe. She may want to call a local domestic violence hotline or battered women's shelter. Shelters can help her look at her options. If she decides to leave, a shelter may be the safest place she can go. Sometimes shelters don't have enough room for all the women and children who need their help. Your friend may need to rely on family and friends for temporary housing.