

SUPPORTING SOMEONE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

A Practical Guide for Friends & Family

Why This Guide Matters

If you're worried that someone you care about might be experiencing domestic abuse, you are not alone and neither are they. This guide is designed to help you recognise the signs of abuse, respond with compassion, and offer meaningful support without putting yourself or your loved one at risk.

Recognising the Signs of Abuse

Abuse isn't always physical. It can also be emotional, financial, sexual, or psychological. Common warning signs include:

- Isolation from friends and family
- Constant monitoring or control of movements, money, or communication
- Fear, anxiety, or walking on eggshells around their partner
- Frequent criticism, belittling, or gaslighting
- Visible injuries or excuses for harm
- Changes in behaviour, confidence, or mental health

How to Talk to Someone You're Worried About

- **Start gently:** "I've noticed you seem a bit down lately, how are things at home?"
- **Listen without judgement:** Let them talk in their own time. Don't interrupt or push for details.
- **Avoid blaming:** Don't say things like "Why don't you just leave?" this can make them feel judged or unsafe.
- **Reassure them:** "You don't deserve this." "It's not your fault." "You're not alone."

Keeping Them (and You) Safe

- Don't confront the abuser—it could escalate danger.
- Avoid written or spoken messages that could be seen or overheard.
- Help them plan ahead—encourage small steps, like storing emergency numbers or keeping a bag packed.
- Let them lead. Even if you think they should leave, the decision must be theirs.
- **Call 999 if someone is in immediate danger.**

What You Can Offer

- **Emotional support:** Listen, believe, and be consistent.
- **Practical help:** Offer childcare, transport, or a safe space if appropriate.
- **Information:** Share local support services or helpline numbers.
- **Patience:** It can take many attempts before someone feels able to leave.

Looking After Yourself

Supporting someone in crisis is emotionally draining. You might feel frustrated, helpless, or frightened. You are not expected to fix everything. Set boundaries to protect your wellbeing. Speak to a support service yourself for guidance. Remember: it's not your responsibility to rescue someone, it's enough to care.

THE FIRST STEP

Domestic Abuse Support Charity

- 📍 Website: www.thefirststep.org.uk
- 📞 Helpline: 0151 548 3333 (option 1)
- ✉ Email: enquiries@thefirststep.org.uk

REFUGE

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (UK)

- 📍 Website: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
- 📞 0808 2000 247 (free and confidential 24/7)

Dont be afraid to ask the question

Your care and concern could be the reason someone finds the courage to reach out. Stay patient, stay present, and know that even the smallest gesture, listening, believing, showing up, can change a life.