

## How Can I Help?

*A Guide for Families, Friends and Others*

Abusive relationships have devastating effects on everyone. **Anyone in an intimate relationship can be abused.** It can be difficult to discuss the abuse and to seek help. You can help if you think someone you care about is being abused.



Remember two important things when helping someone who is being abused:

1. Change takes time.
2. There is no single “right way” to help. The important thing is that you be there to support them in their decisions. (See tips on next page)

For people who have not been in an abusive relationship, it may be difficult to understand why a victim remains in a relationship and even “covers up” for his/her partner. Both of these behaviors can be a direct result of living with a controlling partner. That person’s apparent indecisiveness and loyalty are essential tactics that she/he uses to survive. **This does not mean that your loved one does not need and value your help.** In fact, just the opposite is most likely true. The hardest part of talking to a person who you believe is being abused is getting started. Be sure you have enough time and privacy for the discussion. The first conversation may not be easy but, to be of help, you must begin. Here are some suggestions to get started:

- You seem unhappy. Do you want to talk about it?
- What is it like at home for you?
- What happens when you and your partner disagree or argue?
- Are you scared of him/her? Does she/he threaten you?
- How does your partner handle things when she/he doesn’t get her/his way? What does he/she do?

Support her/him for talking to you; she/he has taken a risk. Let him/her know that you appreciate what they have done and consider their feelings reasonable and normal. Let the other person lead the conversation. She/he needs you to be a good listener. Many people who are abused feel as though they don’t have options and are not able to get out of the abusive relationship. Talking with a loved one or a domestic violence advocate will help them to believe that options may exist. You can learn about domestic violence on the Compass Center website so you understand as much as possible about what they are experiencing.

## Six Tips for Helping a Loved One You Believe Is Being Abused

1. Tell your loved one that she/ he don't deserve to be treated badly and that no one deserves to be abused. This abuse is not their fault.
2. Let your loved one know that there are ways to increase his/her safety, that she/he has options, and that, together, you can get the help that is needed. Compass Center for Women and Families can assist with the safety planning and with understanding options for dealing with the abusive situation.
3. Tell this person what you have noticed that concerns you. Tell them that you believe (or know) she/he is being hurt or controlled. Tell him/her that you are concerned for his/her safety.
4. Avoid focusing on the abuser. Keep this person out of the conversation as much as possible. Remember -your loved one has strong feelings for this person. Focus on your loved one, his/her safety, and your love and concern for him/her.
5. Encourage him/her to call the Compass Center for Women and Families 24-hour hotline to speak with an advocate or to come in for an appointment.
6. As the loved one of someone who is being abused you can call Compass Center for Women and Families hotline and receive support, information and abuse education.

Compass Center Self-Sufficiency Services: 919-968-4610

