



Domestic Violence

Prevention, Information and Resources

How to Help a Friend*

Five Simple Powerful Things to Say to Victims of Domestic Violence

- You don't deserve to be treated this way.
- I am afraid for your safety.
- I am afraid for the safety of your children.
- There is help available.
- I am here for you when you want to get help.

*Recommended by Survivor and Advocate Sarah Buel. Adapted by Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack. See Casey Gwinn, Gael Strack, *Hope for Hurting Families: Creating Family Justice Centers Across America*, Chapter 1, "I Have a Friend" (Volcano Press, 2006).

Tips on How to Help a Friend Who's in an Abusive Relationship**

- Tell them it's not their fault. You can never make someone else hurt you.
- Tell them they don't deserve it. No one ever deserves to be hurt.
- Tell them they're not crazy. A person who's been abused often feels upset, depressed, confused, and scared. Let them know these are normal feelings to have.
- Don't try to pretend that the abuse isn't happening, or that it isn't that bad. Let your friend know that you take it very seriously; pretending it's no big deal doesn't make it go away.
- Tell them good things about themselves. Let them know you think they're smart, strong, and brave. Their abuser is telling them they are stupid and tearing down their self-esteem.
- Try to help your friend break out of the isolation their abuser has put them in. Keep in contact with them on the phone or by going out with them.
- Don't spread gossip--it could put them in danger.
- Don't try to make them do anything they don't want to (it won't work unless it's their decision).
- Encourage them to build a wide support system-- go to a support group, talk to friends and family.
- Don't blame them for the abuse or their decisions; leaving an abusive relationship is hard and usually takes a long time.
- See if they need medical attention--they may not realize the extent of their injuries.
- Give them good information about abuse--you can call your local crisis line and get information about the impact of abuse on children and how drugs and alcohol do not cause domestic violence.

Roanoke County Police – Domestic Violence Division

Office (540) 777-8699 • Emergency Dial 9-1-1 • Non-Emergency (540) 562-3265

Email domesticviolence@roanokecountyva.gov



Domestic Violence

Prevention, Information and Resources

- Tell them that domestic violence is a crime and they can call 911 for help. If it's not safe to stay on the phone with the operator, run or go to safe place.
- Help them develop a safety plan for the times they stay as well as the times when they leave.
- Listen. Let them express all their fears and feelings. Even offering good advice in a kind and respectful manner can be received as pressure and/or a reminder of everything they are not doing "right."
- Don't initially challenge or reject their feelings of shame, guilt, or embarrassment. Give them time. They need to come to their own conclusions about their self-defeating thinking. If they follow what you say, then they have substituted one kind of dependence for another.
- Don't blame or attack the abuser. It will confuse them and, perhaps, cause them to defend the abuser. Up to now they may have found some internal peace by making excuses for a person who says he/she loves them yet can abuse them so badly.
- Be patient. Their self-empowerment may take longer that you want. Go at the victim's pace, not yours, unless the danger is imminent.
- Ask them about the children. Encourage them to talk about the effects this is having on them. Validate those concerns. It may help them leave in future.
- Don't give up. Let them know you will always be there for them when they may need help or just needs someone to talk to.

**Adapted from Women's Rural Advocacy Program, "The Basics of Being Supportive" at www.letswrap.com and enhanced by members of the San Diego Domestic Violence Council and the National Family Justice Center Alliance.

Call Roanoke County Police Department's Domestic Violence Division at (540) 777-8699, (540) 562-3265, or email us at domesticviolence@roanokecountyva.gov for assistance. We can help you obtain warrants, orders of protection and counseling.

Dial 9-1-1 in an emergency.

Roanoke County Police – Domestic Violence Division
Office (540) 777-8699 • Emergency Dial 9-1-1 • Non-Emergency (540) 562-3265
Email domesticviolence@roanokecountyva.gov