



Neighbours, Friends & Families

Talking to People Who Use Abusive Behaviour

It is difficult to see someone you care about hurt others. Are you concerned with someone you think is being abusive to their partner or ex-partner, but don't know what to do? When friends and family remain silent or excuse violence, the abusive person is encouraged to continue the violence. Ultimately, the abuser is the only person who can decide to change. However, as a friend or family member, you can encourage and support change. Always keep yourself safe. Don't get in the middle of an assault. **Call the police in an emergency.**

Tips for a safe, respectful and supportive conversation:

- Choose the right time and place to have a full discussion. You should be in a place you can easily leave if you need to. The abuser should not have the children with him or be drinking or using other substances.
- Never tell someone using abusive behaviour anything their partner has told you.
- Approach the person who you think might be using abusive behaviour when they are calm.
- Be clear and direct about what you have seen.
- Educate the person using abusive behaviour about the different types of violence and help them to realize the consequences of their behaviour.
- Help the person using abusive behavior to understand that anger is an acceptable emotion but hurting someone is not okay.
- Tell the person using abusive behaviour that their behaviour is their responsibility. Avoid making judgemental comments. Criticize the behaviour, not the person.
- Acknowledge the strengths of the person using abusive behaviour. Humiliating them or putting them down will only reinforce the insecurity that is often at the root of abusive behaviour.
- Don't validate any attempts to blame others for the abusive behaviour.
- Inform the person that their behaviour needs to stop.
- Tell the person using abusive behaviour that you are concerned for the safety of their partner and children.
- Never argue with someone using abusive behaviour about their abusive actions. Recognize that confrontational, argumentative approaches may make the situation worse and put someone who is experiencing intimate partner violence at higher risk.
- Encourage the person using abusive behaviour to seek help. Let them know that change is possible.

If the person denies the abuse:

- People who use abusive behaviour will often minimize the impact of their actions and deny that they have done anything wrong. They may state that the situation isn't that bad or that they haven't done anything wrong, or they may blame the victim. This type of behaviour deflects their own responsibility for their actions.
- Keep your conversation focused on your concerns for their family's safety and well-being and reiterate that abuse is never an answer.
- Keep the lines of communication open and look for opportunities to help the person find support to change their behaviour.