



## How to Help Friends or Loved Ones Experiencing Relationship Abuse

### **Suggestive signs of an abusive relationship:**

- Bruises or injuries without explanation or no feasible explanation.
- Excessive tardiness/lateness.
- Frequent phone calls from partner.
- Unexplained absences/ use of sick time/ cancellations.
- Changes in appearance – disheveled or suddenly dresses differently or out of season to possibly cover up injuries or bruises.
- Seems fearful, anxious, irritable, distracted or depressed.
- Intense startled reactions.
- Eating or sleeping problems.
- Chronic, vague medical complaints.
- The person stops talking about their partner.
- Difficulty making decisions.

### **What to do if you think a coworker, friend or loved one may be affected by domestic violence:**

*While there is no one "right" way to help someone, here are important steps to keep in mind.*

- Talk in a safe, private place.
- Explain what you have noticed and that you are concerned – "I'm wondering if things are going ok at home – if maybe some is hurting you."
- "No one deserves to be hurt or controlled by someone else."
- If s/he denies, don't push the issue.
- Let her/him know how you felt you needed to ask, since domestic abuse is so common, and that you are available to talk anytime.

### **How to be supportive:**

- Be patient (on average it can take someone 7 times to leave), be a good listener.
- Recognize that s/he is the expert about her/his situation: don't tell her/him what to do.
- Encourage her/him to seek help from social services or from New Beginnings' Help Line (206) 522-9472.
- If in a work environment, help her/him speak with supervisors and human resources and security about the situation.
- Help her/him make a safety plan. As a friend, or employer, you can also call the Help Line to receive guidance with this.
- Assist in whatever way s/he finds most helpful – screening calls, accompanying out to lunch, etc.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Respect your friend/coworkers/loved one's decisions – this is a complex issue, and you cannot know all of the factors involved.

**How to respond:**

*Remember – you may be the first person he/she has told about the abuse. How you respond can be very important for his/her future ability to trust others and move on. Be non-judgmental and supportive as you respond. Here are a few suggestions to try out:*

- Thank you for telling me – I know it was difficult to do.
- I'm very glad you told me. I'm concerned about the health and safety of you and your children.
- I believe you.
- You are not alone.
- There are people who can help you.
- I'm sorry you have been hurt.
- It wasn't your fault. You are not to blame.
- No one deserves to be treated this way.
- I understand how difficult it is to be in this situation. It may take some time to figure out what to do.
- I will support you no matter what you decide to do.
- Here's a resource: Help Line (206) 522-9472

*Materials provided by:*

Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness -- Community Education & Training  
And "Employee Domestic Violence Policy & Procedure"

[http://www.endabuse.org/section/programs/workplace/dv\\_workplace\\_policies](http://www.endabuse.org/section/programs/workplace/dv_workplace_policies)

[www.stoprelationshipabuse.org](http://www.stoprelationshipabuse.org)

<http://domesticabuse.stanford.edu/coworkers.html>

[www.kingcounty.gov/domesticviolence](http://www.kingcounty.gov/domesticviolence)