



SUPPORT Survivors

A guide for friends, family, and communities
to support survivors of intimate partner violence



domestic & sexual violence
Prevention Coalition

Thank you

This guidebook draws on the knowledge and lived experiences of many people around the world who are dedicated to the love, care, and support of survivors.

We are grateful to those who shared their time and expertise and who contributed the content and review of this guidebook.

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About this guide

Who this guide is for

This guide is for individuals, families, groups, and communities wanting to support people who have experienced domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking by an intimate partner. Whether you know someone who has experienced this type of violence directly or you want to support survivors in general, this guide is for you.

Why we wrote this guide

You can play an essential role in supporting survivors as they seek safety and healing.

People who experience intimate partner violence often look to friends, family, and others close to them for help before turning to the police, courts, and victim service organizations. Friends, family, and community members are the most critical resources survivors have. Survivors say having strong social support makes a significant difference in their overall well-being and reduces the impact of intimate partner violence in their daily lives.

Yet, because intimate partner violence is complex and often misunderstood, knowing what to do or say when someone we care about is being harmed can be difficult. Responding effectively, however, doesn't mean you have to have all the answers. Survivors likely aren't turning to you to "fix" things; they need your support as they find their own answers. Having a better understanding of intimate partner violence and resources can help ensure your response to survivors is as helpful as possible.

Challenging your ideas about intimate partner violence

As much attention as intimate partner violence has received, it is still vastly misunderstood by most people. Our culture wrongly blames survivors for abuse and perpetuates the myth that survivors can easily stop the abuse by leaving the relationship. We blame survivors for staying, punish them if they leave, advise them to act differently, accuse them of exaggerating the harm done, and assume they are manipulating the situation. By focusing on the survivor's actions, rather than the actions of the person using violence, many people, whether intentionally or not, end up colluding with the abusive person.

None of this helps survivors or reduces violence.

When we have a better understanding of intimate partner violence, we can develop greater empathy for survivors, identify their many strengths, understand and trust their decisions, and help them in more supportive ways that increase, rather than decrease, safety. Gaining a better understanding may include challenging and changing your current ideas about intimate partner violence.

What is in this guide

Each situation is different, every survivor is unique, and every community has different people, values, cultures, politics, attitudes, and resources. With this many combinations, it would be impossible to provide a specific step-by-step process for helping all survivors. However, we can guide you to better understand intimate partner violence, learn about a survivor's needs, act on those needs, and find ways to work together as a community to prevent future violence.

This guide focuses on what friends, family, and those close to survivors can do. It does not include information on formal support systems such as service providers or the criminal justice system. If you would like information on these subjects, please see *A Survivor's Handbook: Your guide to Fayette County protective orders, criminal charges, and resources found online at bit.ly/DSVPCHandbook.*

“Friends and family were so important to my healing and safety. The non-judgment was the only way. So many people want to throw up their hands like, ‘If you want to leave, you will.’ ‘If you have the number to call but don’t help yourself, I can’t listen to you.’ [My family member] didn’t do any of that. They knew what it was like to be scared and even to care about the person that’s abusing you. They helped me redirect my focus to my own needs which I now see as rights; my own value which I am learning to accept.”

- Anonymous, survivor

Identifying intimate partner violence

What is intimate partner violence?

Intimate partner violence is known by many other names, including domestic violence, dating violence, power-based personal violence, gender-based violence, spouse abuse, battering, and more.

Intimate partner violence is the purposeful and repeated use of harmful behaviors meant to help one partner in a relationship gain and maintain control over the other partner's thoughts, feelings, and actions. These behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- intimidating a partner
- isolating a partner from other relationships
- controlling a partner's money
- threatening a partner's physical, mental, and emotional well-being

These behaviors, especially when used in combination, can cause harm to survivors.

The intimate nature of the relationship in which this violence occurs makes it different from other types of violence. People who commit intimate partner violence use the love and trust established with the survivor and their regular contact and physical proximity to inflict greater harm.

Someone may use this type of violence to control their partner in many different kinds of relationships, including:

- marriages
- separations
- domestic partnerships
- common law marriages
- having a child-in-common
- couples living together
- dating relationships
- ongoing sexual relationships
- polyamorous relationships
- open relationships
- past relationships

Intimate partner violence can occur in opposite-sex relationships, same-sex relationships, and against people who are non-binary or transgender.

Intimate partner violence may also include sexual violence and stalking to control, intimidate, and instill fear in a survivor.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any sexual act done or attempted by another person without the consent of the victim. Sexual violence may be committed by force, manipulation, bribes, threats, or pressure. Sexual violence also includes situations when someone cannot consent to or refuse the sexual act because of alcohol, drugs, age, mental ability, or any other reason. Sexual violence includes a range of actions, from making unwanted sexual comments to unwanted sexual contact to rape.

Non-consensual sexual acts, even when committed by an intimate partner, are acts of sexual violence.

Stalking

Stalking is a pattern of unwanted attention or contact that would cause a reasonable person fear or concern for one's own safety or the safety of someone else. Stalking can occur in many ways, including physical stalking by the abusive partner, stalking by a third party (also known as stalking by proxy), cyberstalking, and stalking with the use of technology.

Stalking may be a sign of increased danger for the survivor and often makes it more difficult for the survivor to separate from the abuser.

Survivor

When speaking about someone who has experienced intimate partner violence, people usually use the term victim or survivor. However, some people who have experienced violence reject both of these terms. We have chosen to use the term survivor for simplicity and because we are focusing on the strengths of people affected by intimate partner violence. You could use the survivor's name or ask which term they prefer. Respecting the language the survivor chooses can make a big difference in how respected they feel.

Intimate partner violence affects millions of people in the US each year.

24 people per minute (more than 1 person every 3 seconds) are victims of physical violence, rape, or stalking by an intimate partner in the US.

Women in KY experience higher rates of physical violence, rape, and stalking than the national average. **KY has the highest rate of stalking in the country.**

More than **1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men** in the US have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime and reported some sort of violence-related impact. This number may be higher since **intimate partner violence is one of the most under-reported crimes.**

45-75% of women who are **physically abused** by an intimate partner have also been **sexually abused** by that partner.

More than 3 women are murdered every day in the US by a current or former intimate partner.

(Center for Disease Control NIPSVS)

Person using violence

People use many terms when talking about a person who has used violence to gain control in a relationship: perpetrator, abuser, batterer, and others. We use the term "person using violence" to remain focused on that person's actions as having purpose and as the source of harm.

Relationship with an abusive partner

A term you won't see in this guide is "abusive relationship." While "relationship with an abusive partner" may be awkward to say, we use it as a reminder that intimate partner violence is not about a toxic dynamic between two people. Only one person in the relationship is choosing to cause harm in this way. That is the only person who should be held responsible for ending the violence.

Identifying survivors and people who use violence

While it may be easier to think of intimate partner violence as something that happens to other people in other communities, it occurs in every community. It is very likely you already know people who are survivors and people who perpetrate intimate partner violence.

Recognizing people close to you as survivors or people who use violence can be scary, challenging, and uncomfortable. You may have ideas about how survivors and people who use violence look and act that don't reflect the people you know. But people affected by intimate

partner violence do not fit one stereotype. Understanding that anyone can be a survivor or someone who uses violence is the first step to ending this type of abuse.

Survivors: Anyone can be a survivor of intimate partner violence, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, ability, or socioeconomic status.

Survivors may be successful, well-educated, and come from a "good family." They may be outgoing, confident, energetic, and funny. No personality trait automatically protects someone from being targeted for abuse.

Adult survivors aren't the only people harmed by intimate partner violence. Children, relatives, coworkers, pets, and others are also affected.

People who use violence: Anyone can be a person who uses violence, including, perhaps, the people you least expect. People who perpetrate violence take extraordinary measures to make sure others don't see the harm they are causing. In public, they may seem like loving, caring partners; they may only let the survivor see their cruelty. To you or anyone else, they may not seem like the type of person who is abusive.

That's because there isn't a "type" of person who chooses to use violence. They may be active community members, religious leaders, friendly coworkers, good neighbors, long-time friends, or family members. They may be funny, smart, charming, and exhibit kindness. They may use their standing in the community to help hide or excuse the fact they are using violence. They may have even previously spoken out against intimate partner and sexual violence. In other words, they may not fit anyone's idea of a cruel or intimidating person.

So, how do you know when someone is being harmed or using violence?

"I was a successful and confident person. I had achieved so much and I was well liked in my profession. People respected me. That's why it was so hard for my colleagues to accept and understand that I was also being victimized. They would ask me 'why do you stay?' and 'why would you let someone do that to you?' I never knew how to answer those questions, and I later learned I didn't have to have those answers."

- Anonymous, survivor

Recognizing abuse

How do I know if someone I care about is experiencing abuse?

In a respectful and equal relationship, each person is free to share opinions, express feelings, and make their own decisions. In a relationship with someone who perpetrates intimate partner violence, one person uses violence to control the other person.

Every survivor experiences abuse differently and signs that someone is being abused are not always obvious. However, if you notice any of the following, there may be cause for concern.

A person being abused may:

- Seem afraid of or anxious to please their partner
- Mention their partner's "bad temper" or "jealousy"
- Make excuses for their partner's behavior
- Give excuses for physical injuries that seem unlikely
- Spend less time with friends and family members
- Talk about how their partner makes the big decisions, such as how to spend money or discipline children
- Mention their partner tries to control who they speak with or how they spend their time
- Talk about how their partner is constantly checking up on them, calling, texting, reading their email, etc.
- Express concerns about how their partner disciplines their children or that they are afraid to leave their children alone with their partner

A person using violence may:

- Blame their partner for things that go wrong
- Make fun of their partner or say terrible things about their partner in front of others
- Control who their partner talks to, how their partner acts, or what their partner wears
- Accuse their partner of doing things to harm them or the children (such as having an affair or doing drugs) without any proof
- Put their own needs before the needs of their partner and their children
- Blame other people or things (such as stress or alcohol) for their behavior

Ask.

If you think someone you know is experiencing abuse but you aren't sure, it's okay to ask. Even if you aren't certain abuse is happening, it's better to ask now than to wait until your concerns are confirmed or abuse increases. If you ask in a way that is kind and without judgment, most people will appreciate your concern for their well-being.

When asking, it is best to ask face to face and in a safe environment without anyone else present, including children. Avoid asking over the phone or through email or text. People who use violence often monitor a survivor's phone, email, and social media.

If you do not feel comfortable asking directly, there are other ways to begin the conversation.

Ask a general question:

- How are things at home?
- How are you and your partner doing?

Ask a more targeted question:

- Are there times when you are frightened of your partner?
- Are you concerned for your safety or the safety of your children?
- Do you feel your partner does not value your thoughts or feelings?
- Does your partner try to control what you do or say?

Make an observation and express concern:

- We do not talk as often as we used to and I'm worried about you.
- Family life seems to be more stressful for you lately. Do you want to talk?
- I didn't like it when your partner called you dumb in front of me. You're one of the most intelligent people I know. Is everything okay?

If you ask, be prepared to respond supportively.

What if I'm not comfortable asking?

Not everyone is going to be comfortable with asking about abuse and that's okay. You can still let the person know you care about them and their well-being. You could say:

- Things seem a bit stressful for you. What do you need for support?
- It sounds like life is challenging right now. How can I be helpful to you?

Whether you ask about abuse or not, there are still ways you can support someone you suspect is experiencing violence.

What if they deny abuse is happening?

Even if you think someone is experiencing abuse, there are many reasons they might not be ready to tell you about it. They may feel shame or think the abuse is their fault. They might be scared of what the person using violence will do if they find out the survivor told someone about the abuse. They might be scared of how you will react. It's also possible the survivor may not yet recognize what they are experiencing as abuse.

It's important to respect the survivor's boundaries. Whether or not the survivor discloses abuse, it's important to let them lead the conversation at their own pace. Don't try to pry additional information out of them. Even if someone is not ready to talk about the abuse they are experiencing, know that you have still helped just by asking.

Asking about the abuse can let a survivor know they are not alone, that someone cares. Letting them know you will be available if they want to talk and checking in with them lets them know you may be someone they can trust for help.

"I personally wouldn't have reported it if my life were not on the line and no one would have ever known what really happened to me upon my death. ... I adamantly refused to put anyone at risk due to my husband's instability."

- Anonymous, survivor

SUPPORT survivors

What follows are ways you can support someone who has experienced intimate partner violence. Supporting survivors is an active and ongoing process.

Start by believing

Understand the basics

Prioritize safety and self-determination

Provide support

Organize others

Require accountability

Take responsibility

I Start by believing

One of the most important things you can do when someone tells you they have experienced intimate partner violence is to believe them.

Survivors are repeatedly blamed for abuse committed against them: by the abuser, by those that love them, by those that misunderstand intimate partner violence, and by our culture in general. Blaming survivors makes them feel more alone, increases risk of repeated violence, increases risk of additional victims, and allows people who use violence to escape responsibility for their behavior.

Believing survivors doesn't require examining every detail of their story and acting as judge and jury; there are actual judges to do that should the case go to court. It does not require you to see physical evidence; a survivor's statement of their experience is evidence. It does not ask you to deny an accused person due process; there are other mechanisms in place for that.

Believing survivors does, however, ask that you begin with the assumption that the survivor is being truthful. It asks you to take seriously what a survivor is telling you, to believe they are in a difficult and potentially dangerous situation, and that they have experienced fear, control, and harm.

Letting survivors know you believe them is a powerful first step.

I believe you.

If someone tells you they are experiencing abuse, you may be the first person they are telling. Listen without judgment or commentary. Once the survivor has shared what they want to say, you can respond in a kind and caring way. You could say:

- This is not your fault. You are not to blame.
- No one deserves to be treated this way.
- You deserve to be safe and respected.
- Thank you for telling me.
- I'm concerned for your safety.
- I'm here for you.
- I love you.

Additional ways to show you care:

Listen.

When a survivor tells you what they are experiencing, listen to them. Really listen. Do not try to offer advice, do not tell them what they should do, do not interrupt with more questions, do not try to provide a quick fix (there isn't one). Listen. Focus on the survivor's feelings and experiences instead of your own thoughts.

Be patient.

When someone experiences trauma like that caused by intimate partner violence, it can affect how they organize thoughts and communicate events that have occurred. This change in communication is a natural response as the brain works to process the harm done. Be patient if their story doesn't follow a direct timeline.

Recognize the survivor's strengths.

Point out all the ways they have coped and tried to keep themselves safe, even if their actions toward safety have not been entirely successful. Recognize that letting someone know about the abuse and asking for help is an act of courage.

Acknowledge the survivor's feelings.

It is normal for survivors to have many different feelings about their situation and the person using violence. They may feel hope, anger, love, courage, fear, and many other emotions simultaneously or one after another. It can be confusing when the person you love and who was supposed to love you back is using violence against you. Survivors have a right to express those feelings.

Trust and support the survivor's decisions.

Survivors know their own lives better than anyone else and know best what they need to be safe (but they need your help to stay safe). While a survivor's decisions may not be the choices you would make, it doesn't mean they are wrong. You can't always know with what else a survivor is dealing. Maybe the person using violence is making it difficult for the survivor to make a different decision. Perhaps the survivor has learned that doing some things puts them or those they love in more danger. Or maybe the survivor has to make a decision when any choice would expose them to risk. Trust the survivor is making the best decision for themselves and those they care about.

"The best thing friends and family can do is give judgment-free unqualified support, even when the victim is trying to push them away. Connections with family and friends are the best protection a victim has."

– Jess Hill, author of *See What You Made Me Do*

Things to avoid

When someone tells you they are being abused, you may have many questions. However, at this time, it is best to listen and offer support. Be careful to avoid questions or comments that sound like you blame the survivor for the abuse.

Do not ask why the survivor doesn't leave.

Do not assume leaving is the best or safest option for a survivor. Some survivors don't want to end the relationship; they just want the abuse to stop. Others understand that leaving may put them at greater risk of harm or death. 75% of intimate partner murders happen while the survivor is planning to leave or after they have left. Understand, too, that leaving the relationship is not the same as ending the abuse. Many survivors continue to be harassed, stalked, and abused after they have ended the relationship.

Do not ask what the survivor did that led to the abuse.

There is nothing a survivor does or doesn't do that justifies abuse. Implying otherwise is a form of victim-blaming. The person using violence is responsible for their own behavior.

Do not suggest a survivor should try harder to make the relationship work.

Abuse is not a relationship problem. There is nothing a survivor can or cannot do to "fix" the relationship. Couples counseling and mediation should never be recommended in situations involving intimate partner violence. Abuse is a choice made by the person using violence, so it is that person's responsibility to stop being abusive.

Do not ask intrusive questions or press an issue the survivor doesn't want to discuss.

Taking on the role of "fact finder" could be interpreted as not believing the survivor or satisfying your curiosity. The survivor will share what they want to in their own time. Be a good listener and leave the questions to people in different roles.

Do not question whether it's really abuse.

Verbal and emotional abuse, along with "low-level" violence such as grabbing and pushing, etc., is still abuse meant to control a partner and should be taken seriously. This type of abuse harms physical and emotional well-being and may become more dangerous over time.

Do not make excuses for the person using violence.

There are no excuses for abuse. Attempting to make excuses ignores the harm done to the survivor. For more on excuses, see Appendix B.

Do not tell survivors what they should do.

Survivors have the right to make their own decisions in their own time. Abuse is about controlling a survivor's choices and actions, so, even if it is done with the best of intentions, the

survivor does not need another person (you) trying to control them. Supporting survivors means supporting their choices.

Do not give ultimatums.

Do not tell a survivor you will only help them if they leave the relationship. This is a form of control and may prevent the survivor from reaching out to you in the future.

Do not speak poorly of the person using violence.

While you can clearly state you do not like the actions and behaviors of the person using violence, saying bad things about them as a person may put the survivor in a position where they feel the need to defend the abusive partner. It may also make the survivor think twice about coming to you for help in the future.

Do not report the violence without the survivor's explicit permission.

Depending on the survivor's circumstances, reporting the violence or calling the police could create more harm for the survivor. Doing so could further anger the abusive partner, increase the severity of abuse, or unnecessarily involve child protective services. Unless someone's life is in immediate danger, the option of reporting should be left to the survivor.

Do not repeat to others what the survivor has told you.

Doing so may betray the trust of the survivor and put the survivor at greater risk of violence.

General Principles for Responding to Disclosures of Intimate Partner Violence

1. Validate the survivor's courage and strength in choosing to tell someone about the abuse. Let them know you believe them.
2. Listen to the survivor and respond in a non-judgmental way. Take your cues from the survivor and don't pressure them to discuss anything they don't want to discuss.
3. Let the survivor know you will respect their privacy and won't share anything they have told you with anyone else. This is very important for survivor safety.
4. Do not assume what the survivor's response will be. Not all survivors will see the involvement of law enforcement, courts, child protective services, or other formal agencies as helpful.

If the survivor believes they are in immediate danger, help them contact emergency services.
5. Trust and support the survivor's decisions.

What if I find it difficult to believe the survivor?

Survivors of intimate partner violence often face doubt, suspicion, and blame when they tell people about the abuse. Yet, people are no more likely to make false reports of intimate partner violence than for any other crime, like robbery. Research shows that false reports account for only 2% of all reported cases. It is far more likely that the person using violence will lie about the harm they have caused.

If you find it difficult to believe a survivor, it is important to remember three things:

1. Survivors are much more likely to cover up or downplay abuse than make it up or exaggerate it. What a survivor can put into words is likely just a small part of the abuse they have experienced. Because of emotional abuse and other factors, survivors are also more likely to blame themselves for the abuse.
2. Just because you haven't seen the abuse doesn't mean it isn't happening. People who use violence to control their partner are very good at pretending. They work hard to keep their abusive behaviors secret and act differently around others, making it more difficult to believe survivors.
3. People who use violence often use charm and lies to manipulate. They may claim the survivor is lying or that the survivor is to blame for the abuse. They may say both partners have used violence. People who perpetrate intimate partner violence often lie in this way to take attention off their own behaviors and to avoid being held responsible for the harm they have caused.

There are no perfect survivors.

Sometimes people experiencing intimate partner violence may not respond in ways we expect or believe survivors "should" act. People process trauma differently. Their response to trauma may be to laugh, to lash out, to be suspicious of others, to downplay the violence, or show no emotion at all. They may use drugs or alcohol, be depressed, have trouble parenting, or experience other difficulties. No sort of flawed behavior justifies abuse. Keep in mind that some of these difficult behaviors may even be a result of abuse.

A survivor may be very different from the person you once knew; years of abuse and trauma can not only change a person's views of the world but can physically change how their brain works. While you may feel angry, uncomfortable, or confused by a survivor's actions and decisions, try to have empathy and love them for who they are in the moment. They need your care and kindness now more than ever.

Understand the basics

A better understanding of intimate partner violence may help you understand a survivor's actions and how best to support them.

Abuse is not just physical.

Intimate partner violence is not about physical assault; it's about one partner amassing all the power in the relationship to control the other partner. It's not just about what is done to the survivor, but also the limitations on the survivor's actions.

People use all sorts of tactics to gain control. They make threats to their partner's well-being, control their money, cut them off from friends and family, hurt them emotionally, lie about the abuse, and many other behaviors. A person using violence may never physically injure a survivor. However, abuse may still be happening to control the survivor's actions and emotions. Because abuse is more than physical harm, it may be invisible to those around the survivor, which is part of what makes these behaviors so effective.

For a better understanding of the types of behaviors that are used to harm survivors, see [Appendix A](#).

Abuse is a choice.

Some people may blame alcohol, stress from work, or the abuser's own history of trauma as an excuse for violence against their partner. However, intimate partner violence is not caused by anger, substance misuse, mental illness, family history, life stress, or anything the survivor does or does not do. Abuse is a choice made by the abuser.

To read more about common excuses for abuse, see [Appendix B](#).

“It’s not a choice the way you think it is. It’s not a choice to ‘not take any shit from anyone.’ That’s an oversimplification.

The abuser isolates [survivors]. Forces them to cut off friendships or makes them think their friends and family can’t stand them as a person. They slowly take over. They spend the victim’s money. They make the victim feel trapped.”

- Anonymous, survivor

People who use violence in relationships believe they have the right to control their partner and have their own needs put before the needs of others. They believe their partner should take care of them physically, emotionally, and sexually above all else. People who are abusive feel so strongly that they have the right to control their partner, they feel justified in using violence to do so. They see themselves as the victim and, therefore not deserving of punishment.

Intimate partner violence is not about harm caused by both partners.

Intimate partner violence is one-sided abuse. While both partners may have used violence (many survivors do when trying to defend themselves), intimate partner violence should be understood as one person using abusive behaviors to create fear and control the other partner. Using violence in self-defense is not the same thing as using it to control someone. Survivors may use abusive behaviors to respond to the person using violence, but that doesn't mean both partners are responsible for intimate partner violence.

To understand this and avoid the false idea that intimate partner violence is about "he said / she said," you need to look at the history of behavior from each person and consider what purpose the behaviors serve.

To do this, ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is more afraid?
- Who is harmed? How badly are they harmed?
- Who is harmed more often?
- Who is changing their behavior to meet the needs and mood of the other?
- Who gains what with this behavior?

If you would like more information on determining who in the relationship is using an intimate partner violence for control, the Northwest Network has an assessment tool that can be found here: www.nwnetwork.org/advocacy-tools.

Abuse is ongoing.

Abuse is not something that happens in a moment and then ends. It extends to all parts of a survivor's life, affecting work or school, finances and economic well-being, friendships, parenting, hobbies, and more. The effects of abuse continue and build on each other, creating even greater harm. Small abusive acts become a pattern of abuse.

If you look at each abusive behavior on its own (i.e. each time a person insults their partner or each time they keep their partner away from family and friends) it might not seem like a big deal. You might accept excuses for abusive behavior, like accepting that person using violence had a bad day or that no real harm was done. But if you look at all of the abusive actions together, instead of one by one, you can see how they create a pattern of ongoing abuse. It is the ongoing nature of the abuse and the constant impact that harms survivors and creates trauma.

There will be times when it appears the abuse has stopped, or it seems impossible to think the person using violence is being harmful. These thoughts may occur when the person using violence gives the survivor gifts, takes them on dates or family vacations, does nice things for the survivor, or pretends like the abuse never happened. However, these times are often a continuation of manipulation and control, as a way of making everyone, including the survivor, question whether the abuse is happening or whether it's really that bad.

Abuse almost always worsens.

The purpose of abuse is to control another person's thoughts, emotions, and actions. No person gives up these rights easily or willingly. Survivors constantly find ways to resist abuse and maintain control over their own lives through large and small acts of resistance. However, as survivors try to maintain autonomy, people who use violence seek additional and more severe ways to control the survivor by escalating their behaviors and increasing harm.

Ending the relationship is not the same as ending the abuse.

Because of the nature of abuse, the person using violence doesn't stop their behavior when the survivor asks them to. Abusive behavior only stops when the person using violence chooses to stop.

Leaving the relationship rarely convinces the person using violence to stop the abuse. In fact, they may see this as a reason to escalate their behavior to regain control of the survivor. This is why preparing to leave or after the survivor has left can be the time of greatest danger.

After the survivor has left the relationship, the person using violence often just changes their behavior to suit the new circumstances. This may include recruiting others to help intimidate the survivor, manipulating the court system to maintain contact with the survivor, stalking the survivor, blackmailing the survivor, and many other abusive acts.

This means not all survivors see leaving as an option, and it shouldn't be seen as the only solution to ending abuse.

Intimate partner violence looks different in different relationships.

Intimate partner violence can look different from relationship to relationship and across time within the same relationship. Not every person uses the same abusive behaviors or tries to control the same aspects of a survivor's life. One abuser may control a survivor's money while someone else may not care about money but instead control how that survivor spends their time. The point is, it is the abuser who decides what they will control, not the survivor.

The abuser uses what they know about the survivor to decide how to abuse them. For example, if a survivor takes pride in how they dress, the person using violence may damage their clothing. If a survivor likes to cook, then the person using violence may throw dinner on the floor say how awful the food is.

People who use violence often use a survivor's vulnerabilities against them. For example, suppose a survivor is unable to move around without using a walker. In that case, the abuser may put the walker out of reach of the survivor. If the survivor is an undocumented immigrant, the abuser may threaten to have them deported. Or the abuser may use their own vulnerabilities as a way to manipulate a survivor through feelings of obligation.

These behaviors are meant to frighten the survivor and make them act in a way the person using violence wants them to.

Gendered abuse

All violence is wrong and all survivors deserve access to protections and resources. Yet, it cannot be ignored that the vast majority of intimate partner violence is perpetrated by men against women. Approximately 4 in 5 victims of intimate partner violence are female. This is not to say men can't be survivors and women can't be abusive and controlling. It is also not to negate violence between same-sex couples or against non-binary and gender diverse individuals, who experience violence at rates higher than or equal to opposite-sex couples..

Women experience higher rates of repeated violence and are more likely to be seriously injured or killed. While men are more likely to experience violence in public, women are more likely to experience it privately, in the home. Women are more likely to experience coercive and controlling tactics and more types of violence (physical violence, sexual violence, and stalking) while men mostly experience only physical violence.

Prioritize safety & self-determination

Safety must always be considered when helping someone experiencing intimate partner violence. This includes the safety of the adult survivor and the safety of the survivor's children, family members, pets, and your own safety.

A survivor's self-determination (the ability to make their own decisions) is fundamentally linked to safety. Survivors understand the risk they face more than anyone else. They know what has worked in the past and when risk of harm has increased. Therefore, survivors must have the power to explore their options and make their own choices regarding how to define and increase safety.

Safety plan

Ending violence is not about courage, strength, or intelligence. It is about accessing resources and navigating the risks imposed by the person using violence. One of the most effective ways to identify what resources are needed and ways the survivor can minimize risk is by creating a safety plan.

A safety plan is a personalized course of action to improve a survivor's safety in all phases of a relationship with a partner who uses violence. Planning can help survivors prepare for different situations, cope with emotions, and have a better idea what to do during high-stress moments when it is difficult to make decisions and think clearly.

A safety plan is NOT a guarantee that everyone will be safe from abuse.

Safety planning involves looking at different situations (such as when the survivor is at work or school, when children are present, when an assault is occurring, when using technology, etc.) and considering the options available depending on the survivor's unique situation. Effective safety plans include specific steps a survivor can take to reduce risk. This might include identifying the safest room in their house, identifying ways the survivor can minimize contact with the person using violence, preparing an excuse for the survivor to leave quickly, figuring out how the survivor can safely create an emergency fund, or where exactly a survivor can go should they need to leave suddenly. As someone in a supportive role, you can help evaluate the benefits and risks of each option and figure out ways to reduce risk. The decision on which course of action to take, however, is the survivor's to make.

Safety often means more than physical safety. It also includes emotional safety, economic safety, and safety regarding a survivor's vulnerabilities. This may involve thinking about safety around the risk of deportation, the need for a safe caregiver, protection against discrimination, and safety from the backlash against the survivor. It may also mean helping the survivor create a pre-determined response for when someone pressures them to do something they don't want to do, such as reporting the violence or pressing criminal charges.

Safety planning can be in the form of a written plan, informal discussions, or whatever form works for the survivor. Regardless, safety plans need to be changed or updated as circumstances change.

There are many helpful safety planning guides online, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline's safety plan guide, found here: www.thehotline.org/create-a-safety-plan. We have also included some things to consider in [Appendix C](#).

Safe communication

Use caution when communicating with a survivor. People who use violence often read survivors' emails and texts, listen in on their phone calls, check their voicemail and call logs, and monitor their social media. While regular communication with a survivor is encouraged to remind them they are supported, you may need to think carefully when reaching out to them.

It might be helpful to create some coded language or signal with a survivor to communicate safely when the person using violence is present. For example, if the survivor asks you for a certain recipe or what time an event starts or any other pre-determined phrasing, it could mean "Call the first person on my safety list to come pick me up" or "Send the police to my house."

Maintain confidentiality

Keeping a survivor's confidentiality is directly tied to their safety and trust. Survivors take large personal risks when sharing experiences. It is your responsibility to honor what they have shared, whether you believe them or not. Survivors should have control over what, how, and when information regarding their lives is shared. Repeating anything the survivor has told you without express permission to do so could expose them to greater risk.

Signs of escalating danger

Any survivor is at risk of violence and levels of violence often escalates over time. Yet, some factors may indicate a higher risk of greater harm or homicide. It is important survivors assess their current risk and consider any known lethality factors that may be present.

The most significant sign of risk is often the level of control the person using violence has over the survivor. Listed below are some additional signs researchers have identified to mean a risk of fatality is increased. Keep in mind there may be other factors that aren't listed.

- Physical violence has increased in severity and frequency over the past year
- The abuser owns a gun
- The survivor has left the relationship within the past year
- The abuser is unemployed
- The abuser uses drugs or alcohol
- The abuser has threatened to kill the survivor
- The survivor has a child that is not biologically related to the abuser
- The abuser has forced survivor to have sex when they did not wish to do so
- The abuser controls most or all of the survivor's daily activities (such as who survivor can see and speak to, how much money survivor can use, how survivor spends time, etc.)
- The abuser has threatened or attempted suicide
- The abuser has strangled survivor
- The abuser has stalked survivor

Adapted from Jacquelyn Campbell's Danger Assessment

Stalking and strangulation are two of the most potentially lethal forms of intimate partner violence, yet are grossly misunderstood by others.

Abusers often use stalking and strangulation to **terrorize and control** their partners. While frightening and dangerous for survivors, it can be difficult for supporters to understand the impact of these tactics.

Stalking involves behaviors that, when seen out of context, may seem romantic or trivial to others, yet are meaningful and extremely frightening to survivors. It may be difficult for survivors to explain their fear to others, allowing supporters to minimize the devastating effects of stalking.

Strangulation is extremely painful and may cause survivors to lose consciousness, leading many survivors to believe they will die. Yet, non-fatal strangulation often doesn't result in visible injuries, allowing others to dismiss the seriousness of the crime.

For more on these tactics, see the resource section, beginning on page 38.

Provide support

Safety for survivors cannot be achieved alone; it requires support from others. Support for survivors should be respectful of a survivor's decisions, unconditional, and ongoing.

Respectful

The abusive partner has waged a campaign of control over the survivor. Therefore, any support provided should counter that by helping restore a survivor's power to make their own decisions. This means respecting a survivor's right to make their own choices even if we don't agree with them.

Unconditional

Willingness to support a survivor should not be conditional on the choices the survivor makes. For example, you should be willing to help a survivor whether they stay with the person using violence or leave the relationship. While the type of support you can offer may change, your support of the survivor themselves should continue.

Don't be offended or try to force support if the survivor doesn't want to accept the support you are offering at that time. Because survivors have been controlled, the potential feeling of owing someone something, even if you expect nothing in return, can be overwhelming. Be patient and don't withdraw your support if it's not the right time.

Ongoing

Support for survivors should also be ongoing, meaning during their relationship with the person using violence, after the relationship has ended, and if the survivor returns to the relationship.

Once the survivor has escaped the relationship with the abusive partner, do not assume they no longer need your help. The abuse will likely continue even after the survivor has left. The survivor may also need your support to process the changes in their life.

Ongoing support also means not putting the survivor in a position where they always have to ask for help. Be proactive in your support.

If you aren't sure what would be most helpful, ask.

- What can I do? How can I support you?
- What do you need?
- How can I create more safety for you and your children?

Examples of support

One way to offer support is to counter the behaviors used by the controlling partner. For example, if the survivor has been isolated by the abuser, maintaining regular contact could be extremely helpful. If the abuser has been emotionally abusive, regularly remind the survivor of their strengths.

You can offer numerous types of support, including emotional, financial, and practical support. Below is a list to get started with brainstorming, but it is in no way comprehensive.

- Storing the survivor's essential documents, belongings, or important items at your house so they remain safe
- Providing money for a security deposit on a safe apartment
- Helping them open a bank account
- Opening your home to the survivor's pet if the person using violence has threatened to harm it
- Providing transportation to work, school, appointments, etc.
- Attending appointments with the survivor to provide emotional support
- Providing childcare when needed
- Assisting with keeping documentation of the abuse by photographing injuries and keeping a calendar of incidents
- Researching local laws and sharing what you have learned with the survivor so they can make informed decisions
- Learning more about local survivor support agencies, many of which provide services free of charge
- Connecting the survivor to local resources, such as counseling and legal services, advocates, etc.
- Connecting the survivor with supportive organizations, like an LGBTQ resource center or cultural center

"Reassure them that they like the [victim] and that the victim isn't a burden to know. Follow up with them later to let them know you still like them. Compliment them on anything. Domestic violence victims are mostly overwhelmed and feel unworthy and trapped. Be patient and don't stop reassuring them."

- Anonymous, survivor

"An empty lantern provides no light. Self-care is the fuel that allows your light to shine brightly."

- Unknown

- Visiting the survivor so they don't have to be alone with the person using violence
- Supporting a survivor's sobriety
- Listening to the survivor or acting as a sounding board to correct mind games and emotional abuse
- Running errands or helping with household repairs

Honoring your own boundaries and limitations

This list is not meant to suggest you can or should provide all these types of support to a survivor. Pay attention to your own limits and concerns about safety. If you do not feel safe having a survivor stay with you, help them find alternative, safe accommodations. If you can't afford to offer financial support, provide emotional support instead. The support you provide should be right for you, too.

If the support you can offer changes as circumstances change, be clear with the survivor that you can still support them, but in a different way.

"It wasn't until I realized that I couldn't handle my trauma by myself that I began to heal."

- Tammy Quetot,
survivor of stalking

Find support for yourself

Acknowledge that supporting a survivor can be challenging work. You should not be expected to do it alone. Practice self-care and find someone you can talk to about your own feelings, fears, and hopes.

Support for children involved

Even if violence isn't directed toward children themselves, seeing someone they care about suffer can be difficult for young people. Research shows effects of intimate partner violence are similar regardless of whether children witness abuse or were directly abused.

Research also shows that children's recovery depends more on the quality of their relationship with the survivor than on any other factor. Helping children maintain a healthy relationship with the non-offending parent is the best thing you can do for them.

Acting in support of the survivor also helps the children involved.

You can also provide support to children and young people involved by:

- Acknowledging the violence and harm that is happening. Intimate partner violence is a lot scarier for children when no one ever talks to them about it.
- Assuring them the violence and circumstances around the violence is not their fault.
- Letting them know they are loved and cared about.
- Letting them know violence and abuse is never okay.
- Assisting them in recognizing their own support system (i.e., who they feel comfortable talking to, who they can ask for help, etc.)
- Assisting them in accessing resources, such as counseling.

Adapted from David Mandel, *Safe and Together*

Note on reporting

Any person who has reason to believe a child is dependent, neglected, or abused must make a report to the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services, the Kentucky State Police, local police, the local County Attorney's Office, or the local Commonwealth Attorney's Office.

Keep in mind, however, that abuse between two adults does not by itself qualify as child abuse. There is no obligation to report intimate partner violence to anyone.

Always making a report of suspected child abuse when there is intimate partner violence in the home can penalize the survivor, further harm the child, and assist the person using violence in their quest to frighten the survivor. If the Cabinet becomes involved, they may remove the child from the home and/or hold the survivor accountable for the violence. Removal from the home or the survivor can have devastating effects on children.

Experts agree that establishing safety and stability for children is best accomplished by keeping the child in the care of the non-offending parent (i.e. the survivor). Often, by increasing safety for the survivor and holding the person using violence solely responsible for the harm done, safety for children is also increased.

Certainly, if the child is in immediate danger, a report for child abuse should be made. For more information on child abuse and reporting, visit the KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services' website at www.chfs.ky.gov.

Organize others

There are many reasons to involve others, including the fact that survivors need a lot of personal support. It's likely one or two people can't provide everything that is needed. Therefore, *with the survivor's permission*, it may help to engage others in supporting the survivor.

More people, more support

Involving other people to support the survivor is a powerful way to break isolation caused by abuse. When survivors have multiple people they can turn to for support, safety increases and the type of support possible expands.

You can brainstorm with the survivor about specific people you may safely involve in providing support. To get you started, here are some questions you can ask:

- Are there particular people from the survivor's social networks, religious community, neighborhood, work, or school that may be supportive?
- Are there people who live near the survivor who would know what to do (and what not to do) in a moment of crisis?
- Are there people the survivor's children would feel more comfortable staying with if childcare is needed?

A larger response is appropriate

We should recognize that intimate partner violence not only harms survivors; it is an assault on the community's collective safety. Therefore, a community response is appropriate. Are there ways to involve religious organizations, athletic associations, neighborhood groups, etc.? Maybe these groups are directly connected to the survivor, or maybe they aren't. However, they still might be able to provide material support needed for the survivor and work toward preventing future violence in the community.

Guard against public backlash

Depending on the community role of the person using violence or the attitudes of others in the community, there may be individuals, groups, and institutions that find it more convenient to ignore or disbelieve survivors.

Many survivors face backlash (often in the form of blaming the survivor), because they dared to speak about the abuse. This can be especially severe for people in marginalized communities, who, historically, are less likely to be believed. Backlash further harms the survivor, reinforces an abuser's violence tactics, and intimidates other survivors into remaining silent about their own abuse. Having a large group of supporters who believe and publicly support the survivor makes it more difficult to deny the abuse and shift blame.

Both the abuser and the people supporting the abuser may try to blame and discredit the survivor. Below are some examples of victim-blaming statements and possible responses.

Example	Possible Response
It wasn't that bad.	IPV is rarely a one time event; it is ongoing. People who use violence have likely abused before and, without intervention, are likely to do so again.
They are both to blame.	IPV isn't about abuse between two people; it's about one person feeling entitled to control their partner.
The survivor stays so they must like it.	No one likes being abused. Out of all the studies done on IPV there has never been one showing survivors like abuse.
People always try to bring a good man down.	The idea that we should overlook abuse because of someone's identity hurts everyone in the community.
It was the survivor's choice to return to the abuser.	The time after leaving is the most dangerous for survivors because people using violence increase abuse. Survivors often have to make choices without any good options.
The survivor is manipulating the situation to get back at their partner.	There are negative consequences for both parties when reporting abuse. Research doesn't show that survivors gain any advantage in divorces or custody disputes by alleging IPV.
The survivor is doing this for attention.	People disclose abuse because they want support and to be safe. The type of attention received for reporting abuse is not desirable.
The survivor isn't perfect, either.	No one deserves to be abused.

Require accountability

Two questions often come up when talking about people who use violence:

1. Why do people who use violence choose to be abusive in the first place?
2. Can people who use violence change?

Why do people who use violence choose to be abusive in the first place?

The short and simple answer is: Because they can.

People continue to use violence because they keep getting away with doing so. The survivor isn't the person causing the harm and should not be held responsible for stopping it. In fact, because of the unequal balance of power in the relationship, the survivor can't stop the abuse. It's the responsibility of friends, family, and community members to no longer tolerate abuse by the person using violence.

Can people who use violence change?

The short answer is: Yes.

However, the more appropriate question is "Will they change?"

Abuse is a choice. Understanding that, it follows that people who choose to abuse can also choose not to abuse. However, making this change is a process that can take years and requires accountability of the person using violence and supporting opportunities for that person to change.

Accountability

Accountability means ending abusive behaviors and taking responsibility for harm caused. It is a process that involves:

- Stopping the immediate violence
- Accepting responsibility for their abusive behavior

- Acknowledging the harm their behavior has caused
- Expressing genuine remorse for harm caused
- Taking action to repair the harm to the greatest extent possible
- Committing to no longer causing similar harm (in any relationship, current and future)

Adapted from Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, Five Key Elements of Accountability

Accountability isn't something that happens on its own; it has to be implemented. It requires the involvement of others to provide growth opportunities and to teach new patterns of behavior. By involving people in the community, it's possible to intervene well before the abuse meets the legal standard required by the justice system.

Because of the vast differences between communities and the people involved, there is no "one size fits all" for moving toward accountability. There are several examples of what the accountability process looks like within a community, some of which can be found in the resources section on page 38.

Accountability principles

While there are not specific steps to take, there are some things that must be kept in mind in regards to accountability.

Survivor Safety: Any attempt to hold a person accountable for intimate partner violence should begin with the survivor's safety in mind. Approaching the abuser without the explicit knowledge and consent of the survivor may put the survivor at greater risk.

Manipulation: When confronted, the person using violence will likely resist responsibility, make excuses, minimize and deny the abuse, claim to be the true victim, and try to shift blame, especially to the survivor. These attempts must not sway you. Remember, intimate partner violence is not about harm caused by

People who use violence ...” can learn respect and equality—if we insist that they do so. But they won't make those changes unless they are subjected to tremendous pressure, because their cultural values as well as their privileges are pushing them so hard to stay the same.”

- Lundy Bancroft, author of
Why Does He Do That?

“My partner said if I left he would call social services and have them take my daughter because I let her live with a drunk (him) and let her stay somewhere dirty [his mess]. He said he would get an expensive lawyer and use his charm - ‘I’m a very convincing person,’ he would say of himself - to take her [away from me] in court and that I would never see her again. He said I wouldn’t be able to support her financially but he always spent every penny I had even when I took on extra work. I was terrified [survivor services] would report me to child services for not leaving him but I never had the means to successfully do so.”

- Anonymous, survivor

both people in the relationship. Implying the survivor has a responsibility to end the abuse is counterproductive to holding the person using violence accountable.

Behavior change: To avoid accountability, people who use violence may tell others what they want to hear without actually changing their behavior. Apologies and promises without behavior change is manipulation. Someone truly moving toward accountability:

- Should not expect or require forgiveness from the survivor
- Should not expect special treatment for doing the right thing
- Should not consider less frequent abuse to be acceptable
- Should listen to concerns without minimizing or becoming defensive

Perseverance: The accountability process often does not follow a straight line. Do not see this as a failure of intervention, but as a part of the process.

Tips for interacting with people who use violence

- When pointing out behavior to an abusive person, it may be more helpful to use examples of behavior witnessed rather than referring to behavior collectively as “abuse.” This helps to place focus on the behaviors rather than the person.
- Be respectful and call out abusive behaviors without shaming.

- Do not get into an argument with them about behavior or validate any attempts to blame others.
- If the person using violence is a parent, it may be effective to appeal to that person's parenting sense as a way to stop harm.
- Educate about effects of violence on partner and/or children and help develop empathy
- Challenge excuses and redirect them back to their own behavior. This can be done using phrasing such as:
 - Let's not focus on your partner. We are talking about you.
 - Nothing your partner does or doesn't do makes it okay to hurt them
 - No matter how you feel, you are responsible for your behavior

What can I do if someone I care about is using violence in a relationship?

Acknowledging that someone you care about is using violence can be confusing and difficult to understand. If you know this person to be caring and understanding, it can be hard to accept they have abused someone else. However, keep in mind that the abusive person has likely shown you a very different side of themselves than the survivor sees.

Recognizing someone you know or care about is using violence doesn't mean you have to cut that person out of your life. It is possible to keep this person in your life while making it clear you do not support their abusive behavior. This requires acknowledging the harm they have caused and not excusing it. Still, you can use the compassion and care you have for that person to encourage accountability.

What if the person using violence isn't changing?

Change is a long and challenging process. It could be the person using violence decides it's not worth the effort to change and continues being abusive. At this point, you may want to determine whether you want to continue having this person in your life.

However, due to family connections, ongoing concern for the survivor, and other circumstances, removing them from your life may not be realistic. In these cases, it is vital to be clear about your own values. You may continue to care deeply for the person using violence while making it clear you do not condone their behavior and will continue to support the survivor when needed. Recognizing someone's humanity does not excuse abuse.

Take responsibility

Intimate partner violence does not happen on its own. While it is the person using violence is choosing to abuse, there are conditions in our culture, communities, and organizations that allow abuse to take place. While it may be uncomfortable, it is necessary to look at how our actions or inaction, both individually and as a community, have contributed to the continuance of violence.

Examples of ways we may have supported violence:

- Not believing the survivor
- Telling ourselves the violence isn't that serious
- Thinking the survivor is to blame for the harm committed against them
- Sympathizing with and/or protecting the person using violence
- Noticing violence but ignoring it and remaining silent, thereby allowing it to continue

In addition to actions, there are values and beliefs supported by individuals and organizations that contribute to the message that violence toward another person is allowable, justified, and acceptable. These might include:

- Allowing people who have used violence to continue in leadership roles
- Maintaining inequality based on gender, race, sexuality, etc. This may be conveyed by who is allowed in leadership positions and who is not, who is listened to and who is ignored, who is represented and who is invisible, etc.
- Thinking that violence is a "family matter" that should be handled privately
- Justifying violence as a part of identity or culture (i.e. "That's just how families of that culture are" or "Boys will be boys")

Creating change

How do we change our families and communities to spaces that no longer tolerate violence and instead promote safety?

Bystander intervention

Bystander intervention is a proven way members of the community can directly help prevent violence. Special training is provided to help participants learn to intervene safely and effectively before violence occurs. You may consider hosting a bystander intervention training for members of your community and organization. Green Dot Lexington is available to provide free trainings for communities. Visit the Green Dot Lexington website at www.lexingtonky.gov/greendot.

Take action

There's an endless number of ways you and your community can be proactive and help prevent intimate partner violence. Here are a few ideas to begin with:

- Host trainings to help others better understand intimate partner violence
- Help people in the community see that intimate partner violence prevention is for everyone, not just a women's issue or men's issue
- Hold a roundtable discussion to explore ideas others in your community have about prevention
- Create policy or guidelines for what your organization will do when someone uses violence and how to hold them accountable
- Provide safety and support to community members that are survivors; make space for them to share their experiences.
- Provide intimate partner violence resource materials to members of your community
- Develop a culturally appropriate awareness campaign for prevention
- Gain comfort with talking about uncomfortable topics

"Community accountability strategies aim at preventing, intervening in, responding to, and healing from violence through strengthening relationships and communities, emphasizing mutual responsibility for addressing the conditions that allow violence to take place, and holding people accountable for violence and harm."

– The Audre Lorde Project

Bigger picture

Violence against one group of people lends justification for violence against other groups. In other words, violence based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, culture, religion, citizenship, etc. all stem from the same desire for power and control over others.

Many survivors experience multiple layers of violence at the same time (example: a lesbian woman of color may experience homophobia, racism, and sexism), which creates additional barriers for safety and support.

Multiple aspects of a survivor's identity can contribute to an increased risk of violence, whether they are believed, the risks they face when telling others about the abuse, the types of support that are available, the accessibility of services, and more.

In order to ensure all survivors are safe and supported, we must work to end all forms of violence, including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, nationalism, ableism, anti-Semitism, and all other manifestations of inequality. Doing so, however, means challenging the many deeply held attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that contribute to violence. This includes challenging inequality, power in decision making, ideas about public lives versus private lives, and ideas about individual and collective responsibility. This may be a life-long pursuit, but here are a few simple ways to begin:

- Find ways to incorporate and actively model respect and equality in your daily life
- Learn about your own prejudices and discover ways to challenge them
- Explore your own identities and advantages you've received because of them; practice humility
- Create ways to build community with people of different cultures and identities
- Acknowledge injustice and act with humility
- Speak up when you see a group targeted with unjust treatment
- Share skills, knowledge, and resources
- Expand your capacity of empathy

"The probability of violence is higher when the consequences gender inequality intersect with the impact of other forms of inequality and discrimination, such as racism, discrimination against people with disabilities or discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Any factor that reduces or limits access to resources, the social and economic power they hold, or the perceived worth of some groups increases the probability of violence against them."

- Our Watch

Resources: Online

National Hotlines

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
TTY: 1-800-787-3224
www.thehotline.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
www.rainn.org

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
TTY: 1-800-799-4889
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline
1-866-331-9474
TTY: 1-800-787-3224
www.loveisrespect.org

Kentucky

Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs
www.kasap.org

Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.kcadv.org

Intimate Partner Violence

Battered Women's Justice Project
www.bwjp.org

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, & Mental Health
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)
www.ncadv.org

National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV)
www.nnedv.org

Sexual Violence

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI)
www.evawintl.org

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
www.endsexualviolence.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center
www.nsvrc.org

Stalking

Coercive Control
www.coercivecontrol.org

OutrageUs
www.outrageus.org

Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (SPARC)
www.stalkingawareness.org

Technology Safety
www.techsafety.org

Strangulation

Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention
www.strangulationtraininginstitute.org

Teen Dating Violence

Love Is Respect
www.loveisrespect.org

Population Specific Resources

Asian

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence
www.api-gbv.org

Manavi
www.manavi.org

Black/African American

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
www.idvaac.org

Ujima: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community
www.ujimacommunity.org

Immigrants & Refugees

Alliance for Immigrant Survivors
www.immigrantsurvivors.org

National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project
www.wcl.american.edu

Latino

Casa de Esperanza
www.casadeesperanza.org

National Latin@ Network
www.nationallatinonetwork.org

LGBTQ+

FORGE
www.forge-forward.org

The Network la Red
www.tnlr.org

The NW Network
www.nwnetwork.org

Native / Indigenous

Mending the Sacred Hoop
www.mshoop.org

National Indigenous Women's Resources Center
www.niwrc.org

StrongHearts Native Helpline
www.strongheartshelpline.org

Older People

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life
(NCALL)
www.ncal.us

People with Disabilities

Dawn
www.deafdawn.org

The Initiative
www.dviforwomen.org

People of Faith

FaithTrust Institute
www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Women of Color

National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending
Sexual Assault
www.sisterlead.org

Women of Color Network
www.wocinc.org

Legal Resources

Aequitas
www.aequitasresource.org

American Bar Association's Commission on
Domestic & Sexual Violence
www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence

WomensLaw.org
www.womenslaw.org

The Women's Legal Defense & Education Fund
www.legalmomentum.org

People Who Use Violence

Emerge
www.emergedv.com

Futures Without Violence
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

Workplaces

Workplaces Respond to Domestic & Sexual
Violence
www.workplacesrespond.org

Transformative Justice / Community Accountability

Creative Interventions: Resources for Everyday
People to End Violence
www.creative-interventions.org
(Toolkit available)

INCITE!
www.incitenational.org

Transform Harm
www.transformharm.org

For Men

National Organization for Men Against Sexism
(NOMAS)
www.nomas.org

A Call to Men
www.acalltoment.org

Supporting Children

Promising Futures
www.promising.futureswithoutviolence.org

Pets

National Link Coalition
www.nationallinkcoalition.org

Apps for Survivors & Supporters

The inclusion of a mobile app on this page does not constitute an official endorsement, guarantee, or approval by DSVPC.

Before downloading any app, you may want to review information from the App Safety Center at www.techsafety.org/appsafetycenter managed by the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

DocuSAFE
created by the National Network to End Domestic violence
www.techsafety.org/docusafe

myPlan
created by Johns Hopkins University
www.myplanapp.org

RAINN
created by Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network
found in Apple and Google app stores

RU Safe?
created by The Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh & Newton Consulting
www.wcspittsburgh.org/rusafe-app/

VictimsVoice
www.victimsvoice.app

Resources: Books & articles

Supporting Survivors

Family & Friends' Guide to Domestic Violence:
How to Listen, Talk, & Take Action When
Someone You Care About is Being Abused
Elaine Weiss (Book, 2003)

Helping Her Get Free: A Guide for Families and
Friends of Abused Women
Susan Brewster (Book, 2006)

Intimate Partner Violence

No Visible Bruises: What We Don't Know About
Domestic Violence Can Kill Us
Rachel Lousie Snyder (Book, 2019)

See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control, &
Domestic Violence
Jess Hill (Book, 2019)

Why Does He Do That: Inside the Minds of Angry
& Controlling Men
Lundy Bancroft (Book, 2002)

Transformative Justice

Beautiful, Difficult, Powerful: Ending Sexual
Assault Through Transformative Justice
The Chrysalis Collective (Article)

Community Accountability Within the People of
Color Progressive Movement
INCITE! (Article)

Moving Beyond Critique: Creative Interventions
& Reconstructions of Community Accountability
Mimi E. Kim (Article)

Taking Risks: Implementing Grassroots
Community Accountability Strategies
CARA (Article)

Toward Transformative Justice: A Liberatory
Approach to Child Sexual Abuse and Other Forms
of Intimate and Community Violence
Generation Five

Survivor Memoirs

Crazy Love
Leslie Morgan Steiner (Book, 2010)

Know My Name: A Memoir
Chanel Miller (Book, 2020)

Appendix A: Tactics of control

People who use violence use all sorts of behaviors to control survivors. While control may look different in different relationships, there are some similarities. What follows is a general list of behaviors used by people who use violence and some examples of each. Many behaviors fall under more than one category. Many may also be what some survivors refer to as gaslighting. This is by no means a comprehensive list but is meant to present an idea of what control can look like.

Emotional abuse

- Engages in manipulative behaviors to make survivor believe they are “crazy”
- Blames survivor for things that go wrong
- Sets expectations that no one can meet while constantly changing demands/rules
- Says things meant to be cruel and hurtful, such as calling survivor names
- Minimizes accomplishments and contributions of survivor
- Humiliates survivor in public
- Makes survivor feel guilty
- Makes false allegations against survivor when there is no evidence; uses allegations to justify controlling behaviors
- Tells survivor how to dress, act, or think
- Breaks promises, doesn't follow through on agreements, does not accept responsibility
- Develops smear campaigns or starts rumors to divert attention away from their behaviors, to seek support from others, or to turn people against the survivor

Financial abuse

- Denies survivor access to bank account or financial information
- Keeps survivor on an allowance or forces survivor to ask for money
- Destroys survivor's credit
- Prevents survivor from having a job or makes it difficult for survivor to keep a job by harassing them at work or sabotaging childcare
- Demands survivor account for every penny spent
- Requires survivor to turn over earned wages or financial gifts for personal use

- Refuses to contribute to shared or household bills
- Doesn't comply with child support orders

Isolation

- Controls who the survivor spends time with
- Accuses people who support survivor of causing trouble
- Cuts survivor off from supports and resources
- Sabotages survivor's transportation
- Destroys or hides communication devices, such as cell phone or physical mail

Intimidation

- Yells, screams, or uses a threatening tone
- Bullies survivor
- Smashes and destroys survivor's property
- Threatens acts of homicide, suicide, or injury
- Seeks to win at all costs

Stalking

- Monitors survivor's communication through email, text, phone, social media, etc.
- Sends repeated and unwanted messages, voicemails, phone calls, gifts
- Uses information posted on social media to gather information about survivor
- Uses GPS or other surveillance tactics to monitor survivor's location
- Spies using listening devices or cameras
- Shows up in places survivor is or always seems to know where the survivor has been
- Leaves strange or potentially threatening items for survivor to find and let the survivor know they had been there
- Makes fake social media accounts to gain access to survivor
- Has others watch survivor and report back on survivor's daily activities

Minimizing, denying, & blaming

- Doesn't accept responsibility for behavior; blames actions on survivor's behavior
- Insists abusive behavior was meant as a joke or to "protect" the survivor
- Redefines abuse, calling it discipline or "love taps"
- Accuses survivor of exaggerating abuse, says it never occurred or "it wasn't that bad"
- Uses excuses to justify behavior, such as misuse of substances, work, stress, or jealousy
- Blames survivor for injuries (i.e. "if you had just stayed still" or "you shouldn't have tried to run")

Using children

- Undermines survivor's authority as a parent
- Threatens to take the children away from survivor by kidnapping or filing for custody
- Uses children to spy on survivor, requests children report back with information regarding survivor

Using privilege

- Uses gender, education, status, or other privileges to justify making all decisions
- Attacks survivor's vulnerabilities, such as language, education level, language skills
- Uses racial, ethnic, or gendered slurs
- Threatens immigration status
- Uses social status, status in community to question survivor's credibility
- Treats survivor like servant
- Defines gender roles in home and relationship

Coercion & threats

- Threatens to hurt themselves, the survivor, or those the survivor cares about (including children, pets, and other family members)
- Threatens to reveal survivor's secrets
- Displays or threatens to use weapons
- Blackmail

Sexual abuse

- Pressures or demands sex or sexual actions the survivor is not comfortable with
- Rapes or forces victim into unwanted sexual practices
- Refuses safe sex practices
- Controls survivor's reproductive decisions
- Sexually assaults children
- Tapes survivor performing sexual acts (either with or without the survivor's knowledge) and later uses recordings to blackmail, control, and intimidate the survivor

Physical abuse

- Pushes, shoves, pinches, slaps survivor
- Punches, bites, kicks survivor
- Strangles (chokes) or suffocate survivor
- Controls medical care
- Prevents survivor from eating or sleeping
- Restrains survivor so they can't leave
- Causes survivor to injure themselves by having to break free and then claim the survivor did it to themselves

Cultural abuse

- Misuses religion to justify survivor's submission or reinforce survivor's need to forgive
- Refuses to let survivor practice spiritual beliefs
- Minimizes survivors spiritual values
- Forbid survivor from practicing cultural customs

Appendix B: Excuses for abuse

People have all sorts of ideas about what causes intimate partner violence. Still, much of what people believe are really just excuses. Below are some common excuses and an explanation of what we really know about them.

Anger

Intimate partner violence is not about a loss of control of one's temper. If we look more closely, we can see that the person using violence is actually very much in control of their anger. People who use violence don't necessarily blow up at their bosses, coworkers, friends, or other people in their life. Instead, their anger is used strategically, targeted toward the survivor at certain times and in certain places. They can also stop the abuse when necessary, such as when the police arrive. Anger may be used as a tactic to control, but it's not a cause of intimate partner violence.

Substance misuse

People accept substance misuse as an excuse for abuse because we know substances impair judgment. However, substance misuse does not cause intimate partner violence. In fact, most people who use violence against their partners do not misuse substances. Of those who do, many continue to abuse their partners even after they have stopped using drugs or alcohol.

Many people misuse substances and do not use violence against their partners, while many people who use violence do not use substances. This is not to say the two problems don't often co-exist; they do and often worsen each other. However, intimate partner violence and substance misuse should be understood and treated as independent problems.

A word of caution for survivors: While use of substances may not cause intimate partner violence, it can increase the risk and severity of the violence.

Mental health

There is no clinical diagnosis or universal personality for people who choose to use violence. A few clinical diagnoses can increase the risk of abusive behaviors, but none of them cause intimate partner

violence. Like anger, if a person's mental illness were the source of abuse, it would affect all areas of that person's life.

Family history

While many people who use violence may have learned to use abusive behaviors from their own parents, they don't inherit these behaviors. Using abusive behavior is still a choice. Many adults witnessed abuse as children who choose not to abuse their partners. There are also people who choose to abuse their partners that did not grow up in households with violence.

Passion

People do not abuse because they feel emotions more than others. While people who claim to love a survivor so much they become afraid of losing them may be honest about that feeling, it is not an excuse to harm someone. Emotions do not cause behavior. Many of us have a deep love for people in our lives and see this as a reason to keep those people safe, not harm them.

Victim's behavior

There is absolutely nothing a survivor does or doesn't do that causes abuse: not staying, not leaving, not hitting back, not being passive, not drinking, not staying sober. We don't blame survivors of other crimes for being victimized, so why should it be any different for intimate partner violence? The choice to use violence lies very squarely on the shoulders of the person choosing abusive behavior.

Adapted from research by Lundy Bancroft, Author of Why Does He Do That?

Appendix C: Safety planning

The information in this section is only to provide an idea about what a safety plan may include. There are many other things that can be included and good examples of these are online.

Keep in mind safety plans are meant to be reviewed and adapted as circumstances change.

Items & documents to keep in safe, accessible place for leaving quickly

- Personal identification (Driver's License, picture ID, passport)
- Birth certificate (for both survivor and children)
- Social security card (for both survivor and children)
- Immigration papers
- Money, credit cards, checkbook
- Protective order
- Health insurance cards (for both survivor and children)
- Legal papers, such as divorce papers, marriage license, court orders etc.
- House and car keys
- Medications
- List of emergency contacts (in case phone is inaccessible)
- Cell phone and charger
- Change of clothes
- Baby supplies, comfort items for children
- Valuables (e.g. jewelry)

During an argument

- What is the safest room to be in at home? (i.e. away from knives in kitchen or weapons in other rooms, away from rooms that have only one exit, etc.)
- What are options for escaping your home? Consider windows, doors, elevators, stairwells, etc.
- If you leave home where will you go?
- Have you established a signal with a friend or neighbor to indicate you need help?
- Have you discussed a safety plan with your children should there be physical violence?
- Do you have a free emergency 911 cell phone if yours is taken or destroyed?

At home

- Can you change the locks on your doors? Can you purchase alarms to alert you if a window or door has been opened? Do motion lights need to be added?
- If you've moved have you taken steps to keep your address confidential?

At work or school

- Who can you speak to about your situation? Tell them about what you would like them to do if the person using violence shows up.
- Are there ways work or school can help? (e.g. screening calls, altering your hours, etc.) Is there anyone who can escort you to and from your vehicle or the bus stop and wait with you until you are safely on your way?
- Is there an alternate route you can take to and from work or school?
- Have you informed your children's daycare or school who is authorized to pick up or visit children?

When preparing to leave

- Consider opening your own private bank account in your name.
- Can you have mail sent to a friend's house or a PO Box?
- Have you left a "go bag" with a friend?
- Who can you stay with if you leave?
- Who can care for your pets if you leave and can't take them with you?
- Can someone lend you money for a security deposit or for necessities while you adjust?
- Can you change passwords or pin numbers on any accounts you own?

Emotional Safety:

- Who are supportive people you can call who understand your situation?
- Who can validate your feelings and remind you of your best qualities?
- Where are the local survivor support groups you could attend?

domestic & sexual violence _____

Prevention Coalition



Lexington Department of Social Services

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