

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INFORMATION FOR FRIENDS & FAMILY

Statistics

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline has received more than 1.7 million calls for assistance since February 1996. *National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2007.*
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline answers more than 19,500 calls a month from victims, friends and family seeking help for violence at home. *Ibid.*
- The calls to The National Domestic Violence Hotline increased 8% from 2005 to 2006. *Texas Council on Family Violence, www.tcfv.org.*

Local Statistics

- In 2007, The Houston Area Women's Center received almost 39,000 calls on our Domestic Violence Hotline.
- When responding to our client survey about how they learned about HAWC services, referrals by friends/family members and police referrals were the top sources given.

Overview of the Issue

- Support from friends and family reduces the burden of blame and shame that survivors feel. It is vital for victims to experience love without judgment or condemnation for what has happened. Supported victims feel stronger and more able to make decisions; judged victims feel afraid to tell anyone else about the abuse.
- Survivors need someone to ask them about their relationship; they will not usually initiate this conversation.
- Often, loved ones cannot financially or emotionally support victims for long periods of time, and often feel they are not doing enough. Helping the survivor access services is the best support one can give.

What Can You Do

- Listen without judgment, believe without underestimating the level of danger, and respect the victim's decisions, even if you disagree. Help the victim recognize abuse and its effects.
- Offer practical assistance: create a secret phrase for when she/he is in trouble and respond to it; offer transportation and baby-sitting services; keep a change of clothes for her/him.
- Learn about the issues surrounding domestic violence, the spectrum of resources and important emergency numbers. Pass this information along to the abuse victim and other friends.
- Supporting a friend can be stressful and frustrating, even frightening. Know what your personal boundaries are when helping the victim and don't feel pressured to help more than you are able.
- Do not put yourself in danger by physically intervening. Call the police.

Impact on Victims

- Friends & Family of domestic violence victims can play an important role. They support and encourage a victim who fears being believed and they provide information and explore options about programs and services.
- Survivors must know that friends and family members understand the abusive person is responsible for the battering/violence.
- Having friends and family help with a safety plan or take care of a survival kit can make an abuse victim feel stronger and more confident.

Quotable

Friends and/or family members cannot remain neutral in regards to the issue of domestic violence. Sometimes they are the only ones who have access to survivors and who can help the survivor get support. It is not their role to be 'rescuers' but they can make a difference by providing practical and emotional support.