



If Someone . . . (Suggested Responses)

When a congregant, student, member or colleague reveals that they are experiencing abuse – or when you suspect abuse is occurring - responding appropriately and sensitively can be uncomfortable or difficult. These suggestions are meant to guide your response, but each situation is different and there are no “one size fit all” answers. If you find yourself feeling unsure of what to do or say, contact JCFS, SHALVA or other community resources.

What is abuse and what are the signs of abuse?	Abuse is a <u>pattern</u> of coercive behavior characterized by the misuse of power and control by one person over another who are or have been in an intimate relationship. Abuse can be physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, spiritual, economic or psychological. It can occur across the lifespan, in all ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic groups. A sign of one behavior or injury may or may not be an indicator of abuse; a <u>combination of repeated signs</u> is a compelling indicator that abuse is present.
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How can I help?	<p>ASK – If you think that someone is being abused, talk to them about it. Just knowing that someone cares can break through the wall of isolation.</p> <p>LISTEN – Believe what they say, validate their feelings, help them realize the abuse was not their fault, let them know they are not alone.</p> <p>RESPECT – Understand that they are the only one who can make decisions regarding their life.</p> <p>INFORM – Provide community resource information.</p>
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<p>If someone reveals abuse in his/her relationship or you suspect they might be experiencing abuse</p>	<p><u>Don't</u> blame, make judgments or statements about what he/she should do or suggest talking together with the abuser.</p> <p><u>Do</u> be direct.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is everything okay? • How are things at home? • I care about you; I'm concerned about you. • If you need me, I am here.
<p>If someone has an ugly bruise on their cheek (or other visible part of the body)</p>	<p>Visible physical injuries should <u>always</u> be addressed, especially if an individual has frequent injuries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I noticed your face – how did this happen? • I'm worried about you. If there is something going on at home, I have a number you can call for help. You can make that call from here right now. I'll stay with you if you want or leave you alone if you prefer. <p>Determining safety is critical. If someone reveals that they are in danger of physical harm and especially if there are weapons in the home, it is important that the individual be advised to contact the police.</p>
<p>If someone comes to you for counseling with their partner and you suspect that there is abuse in their relationship</p>	<p>Call each <u>separately</u> and ask if there is anything in particular that they would like to discuss with you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm concerned about some of the things you mentioned during our conversations. Are you okay?
<p>If someone is embarrassed after divulging painful information and says, "I never thought you would talk to me again."</p>	<p>Assure her/him that you believe them, do not judge them, everything they said is private and that you are there to help and support them.</p>
<p>If someone is continually exchanging harsh words with a partner or child – words that you would classify as verbally abusive</p>	<p>Diffuse the situation by talking about the need to stay calm, take deep breaths, think before speaking, etc. Pull individuals aside and talk to them about appropriate kinds of communication.</p>

<p>If a child makes a comment about daddy kicking mom (or some other kind of altercation)</p>	<p>I heard what you said about mom and want to talk more with you about this. Is mom okay?</p> <p>Call mom and ask her to come to talk with you about some disturbing comments her child made. When she does, gently inform her of the remark and stress that you are concerned, are there to support her, and can share information about community resources. She may vehemently deny that she is being abused but if it is occurring, your caring may help her to eventually take steps to resolve her situation. Remember, NOT to say anything overtly about abuse if Mom's partner is with her!</p>
<p>If someone is upset because posters about domestic violence have been displayed or information about abuse was printed in a bulletin or newsletter</p>	<p>Thank you for your thoughtful opinion. It is important that we openly identify abuse as something that can happen in our community – and that if one of our community members is experiencing abuse she/he is not alone in their pain. By publicly displaying or disseminating information, we are sending a message that this is a place of safety, caring and support.</p>
<p>If someone agrees that information about community resources should be available, but asks why that information is in women's restrooms only</p>	<p>While it is true that the majority of abuse victims are female, men can also be abused. And, men may need information so they can help their friends or family who are in abusive situations.</p>
<p>If someone comes to pick up a child from school and appears to be on edge and close to exploding</p>	<p>Engage them in a short conversation; say things that acknowledge how hard a day can be, how much we all have on our plate, etc.</p>