



CREATING SPACE FOR HER TO TALK

Ensuring that girls and women feel safe to talk about what is happening in their lives, particularly if they are experiencing violence or intimate partner abuse, is crucial for their well-being and safety. Community leaders play a significant role in helping to support young women by taking steps to create a supportive environment where girls feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues. Here are some steps you can take as a leader in your community:

Make Yourself More Aware through Education.

Learn about the signs and dynamics of intimate partner violence and how it might manifest for girls and women. Understanding the issue can help you recognize potential signs and respond appropriately. Sometimes, violent relationships can impact a girl's ability to communicate and seek help.

Establish Trusting Relationships

Building a trusting relationship based on safety, respect, and empowerment is essential. Strive to create an atmosphere of openness and non-judgement where the girls and women can feel comfortable confiding in you. This may be difficult for some, given potential experiences of betrayal or harm, so take time to discuss. Allow them to set the pace for building trust and disclosing information. There should also be a focus on creating an environment where girls feel empowered to make choices and avoid pressuring them to disclose information when they are not ready. Use open-ended questions and active listening to encourage dialogue and use clear and consistent approaches.

Provide a Safe Space

Work with other leaders to ensure the physical environment feels safe and welcoming, with options for privacy. Set ground rules for confidentiality if you are working with groups of girls or women. Explain that respect, confidentiality, and boundaries are critical to group interactions. Maintaining confidentiality and privacy when girls want to discuss sensitive issues is paramount.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE BE A LEADER



Creating a safe space may also involve reflecting on and challenging your worldviews and assumptions and considering the experiences and demographics of the girls you work with, including their age, culture, and race.

Get Training

It is essential to understand how to recognize signs of abuse and how to respond appropriately to provide support and avoid re-traumatization. Ask your workplace for training that covers protocols for reporting suspected abuse and how to ensure the safety of victims. Ask your workplace if there are established self-care mechanisms and support for leaders who regularly engage with victims and survivors and how you can participate or access these resources.

Offer Supportive Resources

Seek out and learn about the supportive resources available in your area. This could include counselling, support groups, and service organizations that provide support to victims of violence. Gather and have information readily available so that you can offer it to the person in need to help them. Involve them in deciding what to do next and help facilitate connections to other services or agencies.

Learn about and Follow all Organizational Policies

Learn about your organization's policies and procedures for addressing instances of intimate partner abuse or violence being experienced by a program participant. Ensure that you are clear on how to respond if a girl discloses abuse or if you suspect it. You must prioritize the safety, autonomy and well-being of victims.

Raise Awareness and Empower Girls and Women

It is vital to raise awareness about intimate partner abuse and violence through educational sessions that generate awareness and discussion in your community. Doing these types of activities helps to reduce stigma and encourages girls to seek help if necessary. By ensuring we empower girls with knowledge, we can help them achieve healthy relationships, boundaries and consent. Have talks with girls and women on these topics by integrating them into your other activities to help them recognize unhealthy behaviours and understand their rights in relationships.

Be a Role Model

Foster a culture of empathy, understanding and healing in all your interactions with girls and women. Demonstrate respect for boundaries, active listening and validation of their experiences.

By taking these intentional steps, you can help create a supportive, empowering environment where girls feel safe to talk about what is happening in their lives and receive the help they need.

Learn more at www.abusehurts.ca/prevention