



Stay Connected and Check-In

Abuse can happen in every neighbourhood and affects 4 in 10 Women in Canada. This may be happening in your neighbourhood, and you may feel like you want to help. If you suspect someone in our neighbourhood, it is important that you approach this topic with sensitivity and caution. Always remember it is the person's right to seek help or involve the police. It is most important that you establish trust and approach the situation sensitively using delicacy and consideration so that the person will view you as a source of support. Here are some steps you can take to safely stay connected and check in on your neighbour.

Educate Yourself

Learn about the signs and symptoms of domestic violence and understand the dynamics involved. This will help you recognize the potential signs of abuse more effectively. Some of the signs you might see include:

- Making excuses for injuries/has unexplained injuries.
- Wearing clothes that don't fit the season, like long sleeves in summer.
- Experiencing personality changes – more withdrawn, more emotionally upset or agitated.
- Constantly checking in with their partner.
- Overly worried about pleasing their partner.
- Without access to their own money.
- Partner speaks negatively about the victim, calls them names, and tries to demean them.

Establish Trust

If you have a relationship with the individual, try to maintain open communication and build trust. If you don't know them start by introducing yourself in a friendly and non-threatening way, for example "Hi, I'm [name], I live nearby and I just wanted to say hello. Respect the person's boundaries and privacy and do not ask prying or invasive questions. Offer help if you see someone struggling with something in a non-intrusive way (i.e. "do you need help taking those groceries in?"). Engage in small talk and casual conversation to establish a rapport; talk about the neighbourhood and not their specific situation. Use active listening and show a genuine interest in what they have to say. This can help them feel valued and respected. If they express challenges or difficulties let them know you are there to support or to help them access support and follow through on anything you agree to do.

Check in Regularly

Find subtle ways to check in on the person such as dropping of a friendly note, offering to run an errand for them, or just chat while you are walking by their house. Let them know you are available if they ever need anything.

Learn about the Domestic Violence Prevention and Support Resources in Your Area

Learn about the domestic violence, intimate partner violence or elder abuse resources and community services in your area. This includes hotline numbers, local shelters, counselling, and legal services. Understand what services they offer and make some notes about how to access services so that you can provide these to your neighbour if they request help. Seek guidance from these experts if you are unsure about the best way to support someone experiencing domestic violence.

Support Safety Planning

If the person discloses abuse or expresses concern for their safety, support them in developing a safety plan. It is important that they actively participate in and own the decisions about what steps they are going to take, while your role is to be patient and non-judgemental. You can provide information, support and encouragement but you must respect their autonomy and choices, they must be allowed to make their own decisions about how to handle the situations.

Your role as a supportive neighbour is crucial, but it is also important to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of the person experiencing the abuse. If you observe concerning behaviours or incidents, you may want to consider writing these down as they may be helpful should the person seek support from the authorities or support services in the future. If you believe the situation is urgent or life threatening, don't hesitate to call 911.

Learn more at www.abusehurts.ca/prevention