

## TIPS FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS

### Do:

- Make sure you talk to the survivor in a space that is safe and confidential.
- Take the time to listen, and **affirm what the person says and feels**.
- Communicate that you care about their safety, that they do not deserve to be hurt, and that the **abuse is not their fault**.
- Let them know that what they are experiencing is normal and that **they are not “crazy”**.
- **Highlight their strengths**. Their abuser may have been tearing down their self-esteem.
- **Share information about the dynamics of domestic violence**, such as the materials from this training! It is often very useful and empowering to go over the power wheel, cycle of violence and other resources.
- **Respect the person’s choices**, even if you don’t agree with them.
- Help them **identify safe/supportive relatives and/or friends** that can constitute their support system. You can also help them find a support group.
- **Be patient**. Self-empowerment may take longer than you want. Go at the victim’s pace, not yours. Let them know help exists but don’t pressure them or rush them.
- Connect them to **domestic violence resources**. Offer to call these resources with them.
- **Say “I don’t know”**. If you don’t know the answer to a particular question, say so and offer to help them find an answer. This builds trust between you and the survivor.
- **Ask non-leading questions and use neutral language** that doesn’t carry assumptions about the nature of the survivor’s relationship with their abuser. This will reduce the victim/survivor’s fear of you judging them if, for example, they are not married to their partner or, especially, if they are in a same sex-relationship.

### Do Not:

- Diagnose or judge the person’s choices; do not draw conclusions about what they may be experiencing or feeling. **Avoid saying things like “I know how you feel”**.
- **Judge or criticize their abuser**.
- **Do not pressure the person to leave the abusive relationship**. People stay in abusive relationships for many reasons: the abuser might have threatened to hurt them or their children if they leave. The abuser may also have control over the person’s immigration status or finances and they may have promised to change, and the victim may still love them.
- **Don’t offer too many referrals**. This might leave the survivor feeling overwhelmed and confused. Select your referrals carefully and give as much information as possible about the service/person you are referring them to. Offer to call together as persons in abusive situations may not follow through with referrals for many reasons (fear, shame, guilt, etc.)