

Here are some things to keep in mind when you want to help someone in a damaging or dangerous relationship.

1. One of the hardest things to remember when you care about the person being hurt is—your friend or loved one does not need you to rescue them. The best way to help is by giving encouragement and support.
2. Whatever the form of abuse (Physical, emotional, Psychological) victims often blame themselves. Abusers justify or make excuses for their behavior and a person can begin to believe that they, not the abuser, are really the problem.
3. Listen, Listen, Listen. Just having someone “hear you out” without making judgments is a huge gift to someone questioning what they are experiencing.
4. Pay attention to the steps the person has begun to take (or is considering); affirm your belief in their abilities. For example: “It takes a lot of courage to do what you are doing” “ It is ok to take care of you” I admire you for going ahead with what you planned even if he/she has decided not to “ “ You deserve to feel safe and respected in your relationship”
5. Include your friend in plans you make whenever it feels right. Find ways to get your friend into activities where they are interacting with others who treat in a respectful, caring way.
6. Always remember your role is not to “fix” things but to support your friend or family member as they find their way through the situation/crisis.
7. Remember to keep it casual, keep your reactions focused on what she thinks and feels so you remain a safe place to “vent” or confide important things.
8. Your friend may want to keep talking about the abusive person but try to minimize that focus. Keep in mind it is more productive to talk about your friend and what steps they can take rather than wasting time trying to “figure out” why the abuser does what he/she does.
9. Let your friend know you believe in them and that you trust them. It never hurts to remind them you will be there if they need you. But, don’t promise more than you can do---set your own healthy boundaries.
10. Always focus on your friend when you make comments-- try to avoid telling them what you think they should do---even through they will ask. Your friend may tell the abuser everything you said in an attempt to avoid a fight or to prove their loyalty.
11. You may not find it easy to be a friend to someone being abused but ---you can play an extremely important part in your friend’s journey.
12. If you have taken the time to read this and think about what you can do –thank you, you are a good friend!