

RELATIONSHIP ABUSE/ DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV) TOOL FOR CONTINUUM OF CHRISTIAN CARE

This tool is designed to help pastors or lay leaders with little training help a person in an abusive relationship. The one being victimized has shown great courage in sharing with you. Your role is to listen and believe. Your non-judgmental listening ear is a great gift! You don't need to know all the answers, your caring presence speaks volumes. Assess the level of danger in the relationship: guarded-general risk; elevated; significant risk; or extreme-severe risk to determine the recommended level of immediate care (minimum, moderate, maximum). Also consider the information on the back of this page about what to DO and what NOT to do. Keep your safety and the person being victimized in mind!

Level of Physical Danger	Guarded – General Risk	Elevated – Significant Risk	Extreme – Severe Risk
Warning Signs	Occasional incidents of belittling, name calling, and truth twisting; may believe partner is caring, but feels like “walking on eggshells”.	Frequent incidents involving yelling, screaming, hitting, stalking, making threats; there is isolation from friends and family and fear of partner.	Frequent incidents of being beaten physically and verbally, threats with a knife, gun, or some other weapon, strangulation, or destroying property; fear of death from partner.
Urgency of Immediate Care	Minimum to Moderate, but offering consistent support and care is essential	Moderate; offering consistent support and care is essential	Maximum
Goal of Care	Offer the one victimized advocacy and counseling resources so that they can learn about domestic violence and be proactive in thinking about safety.	Safety and risk reduction is a priority, as the situation is dangerous. Education about domestic violence and counseling/advocacy resources are needed, as well as a safety plan so the one victimized is empowered, knowing how to get safety.	Safety is the top priority. This is an extremely dangerous situation. Offer resources to help the one victimized get to a safe place like a shelter. Suggest involving police when leaving or returning to gather belongings.
Resources	<p>These websites can be helpful resources for learning about domestic violence, including safety planning:</p> <p>www.theraveproject.com www.faithtrustinstitute.org www.nnedv.org futureswithoutviolence.org</p> <p>Refer to local domestic violence organization and/or professional counselor trained in domestic violence (Christian counselor preferred). However, couples/marriage counseling is NEVER an appropriate response to domestic violence.</p>	<p>These are all places where you can make an immediate referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local domestic violence shelter • State or Provincial Coalition • National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-7233; www.thehotline.org) <p>Refer to previous websites</p> <p>Refer to local domestic violence organization and/or professional counselor trained in domestic violence (Christian counselor preferred). However, couples/marriage counseling is NEVER an appropriate response to domestic violence.</p>	<p>If in immediate danger, call police or 911</p> <p>These are all places where you can make an immediate referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local domestic violence shelter • State or Provincial Coalition • National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-7233; www.thehotline.org) <p>After safety is achieved, refer to local domestic violence organization and/or professional counselor trained in domestic violence (Christian counselor preferred). However, couples/marriage counseling is NEVER an appropriate response to domestic violence.</p>

← Making referrals is key, but it is essential to respect and honor the victim/survivor's decisions each step of the way. →

What to DO:

1. DO remind the one experiencing abuse that safety is God's priority. Give Scripture references that support the truth of God's care and concern for safety. See Psalm 55, read the entire Psalm, note verses pertaining to God's care. Pray prayers for safety, see Psalm 142.
2. DO ask what is needed from you, for example: someone to listen to and believe, connections to resources, a safety plan, support, etc. (Don't assume that you know what is needed or what is best, ASK and LISTEN!)
3. DO continually focus on safety first; that needs to stay at the top of the priority list.
4. DO help make connections to support services, even if they are not Christian. You can help in a walk-alongside role, providing the spiritual support as the person seeks help from agencies that offer other kinds of support; "build a bring from the steeple to the shelter".
5. DO empower by offering choices and by affirming choices that have been made (even when you may not agree). Choice has been denied in the experience of abuse, not it must be restored.
6. DO maintain strict confidentiality: always get permission before sharing any information with anyone else.
7. DO offer guidance as you are able given your own knowledge; then refer to others when the needs are beyond your training or expertise.
8. DO be aware that computer and phone use may be dangerous. Ask about the best and safest way to stay in touch and be careful not to increase danger by making any contact without prior planning.
9. DO offer hope given through Jesus Christ (and grab onto some of that hope for yourself as well; all things are possible with Christ).
10. DO expect progress to take time; take care of your own needs and maintain your hope and faith. You may choose to refer to a responsible person who can be available to walk alongside and help navigate the difficult terrain on the long road toward healing.

What NOT to DO:

1. Do NOT emphasize saving the relationship or marriage at all costs, nor should you counsel to stay in an unsafe relationship. It is the abuse (not the leaving for safety) that has broken the marriage.
2. Do NOT attempt to force any action, even if it seems right to you. This will be disempowering and feel like more abuse.
3. Do NOT demonize the other party; understand that feelings between partners are often very strong and very conflicted.
4. Do NOT place blame on the one who has been abused, or blame their past choices. Relationships are very complicated and you don't know all the variables. What is known is that abuse is inexcusable; all the blame belongs to the one who chooses to abuse.
5. Do NOT share any confidential information with the one who is abusive; this could be extremely dangerous.
6. Do NOT conduct couples or marriage counseling. Abuse is about one person seeking power and control (often using criminal acts), not about two people desiring a relationship. Couples counseling is ineffective and can increase the risk of danger.
7. Do NOT think that you can handle this on your own, or keep it "in house"; community resources including those with particular expertise in domestic violence should be used whenever possible.
8. Do NOT expect the one who has been abused to leave the relationship right away; it's often a long process which involved leaving and returning several times before a permanent situation of safety is attained.
9. Do NOT assume the crisis is over too soon; there is no "quick fix". Those who abuse often confuse regret (I got caught), remorse (I'm sorry) and repentance (I was wrong and know that I can never do that again). In our rush, we settle for less than what is needed for true change.
10. Do NOT lose hope or give up as you walk alongside the one who has been abused, or the one who seeks to end their abusive behavior. The journey toward healing is a long and winding road.