

MAKING THE DECISION TO TALK WITH SOMEONE ABOUT BEING ABUSED

Safety and Well-Being Tipsheet Series

If you are being abused or if you experienced abuse in the past, there are many factors to consider when deciding whether to talk to someone about it. You might feel embarrassed, ashamed, or afraid that you will be blamed for what happened to you. You might be afraid that your abusive partner will find out. On the other hand, it can be very helpful to talk with someone about your experiences. Another person may be able to...

- Offer you support
- Help you to plan for safety
- Help you to access resources
- Support you in making difficult decisions
- Help you to understand how the abuse has affected your physical and mental health

If it's safe to do so, you might want to try writing down your thoughts and concerns about talking to someone. Remember, only you can decide whether and when to talk to someone about being abused.

Talking with a friend or family member: You may decide that you want to talk with someone you know. If you decide to talk with a friend or family member, you should choose someone who...

- Will listen to you
- Will believe you
- Will not judge or blame you
- Will not tell anyone else what you tell them unless you want them to

Talking with a domestic violence advocate: You may decide that you want to talk with someone who has experience working with people who have been abused. Domestic violence advocates can offer you support, help you to plan for your safety, and connect you with resources in your community. An advocate may also be able to help you ask the court for an order of protection and refer you to an attorney who can help you file for divorce and petition for custody of your children and child support. Many domestic violence programs offer support groups where you can talk with other people who have experienced abuse by a partner.

To find your local domestic violence program, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or (800) 787-3224 (TTY).

Talking with a therapist: Experiencing abuse can affect how we feel and how we respond to other people and the world around us. We might feel frightened, hurt, sad, confused, angry, ashamed, or hopeless. These responses are because of what happened to you, not because there is something wrong with you. You may decide to talk with a professional therapist (a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist) about how the abuse has affected you. Your local domestic violence program, rape crisis center, or the local YWCA may be able to refer you to an agency that provides counseling or recommend a private therapist. You may also want to ask friends or family members or your doctor for a recommendation. When choosing a therapist, you can ask the therapist questions about her experience working with people who have been abused and about other qualifications that are important to you.

If you are being abused, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or (800) 787-3224 (TTY).

For more information on the intersection of domestic violence, trauma, mental health, and substance abuse, contact the National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health at (312) 726-7020, 312-726-4110 (TTY), or info@nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org.