

Is someone you know being abused?

WARNING SIGNS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Her social relationships and activities are curtailed.** He may convince her to stop hanging out with friends, may force her to stop working, may refuse to “let” her go to church or Bible study.
- **He makes all the rules.** He decides whether or not to tithe, where the couple lives, whether she can participate in a church activity (such as the women’s retreat or Vacation Bible School). He might even decide what clothes she is “allowed” to wear, or whether she can go to school.
- **He puts her down.** He teases her, makes her the butt of his jokes, may call her by a vaguely insulting nickname, undermines her authority with the children. He may make fun of her appearance, her opinions, her religious convictions.
- **She is afraid (or her kids are afraid).** You have seen him glare at her, and you have seen her flinch. You know that there are problems in the home (which she may claim are all her fault—that’s what he wants her to believe), but she has been unwilling to share them with you. You may have seen the frightened look on her face as she takes the children out of the sanctuary during the church service because she fears his reaction if they are disruptive. You sense a deep uneasiness.
- **She has been injured (or you have seen marks of some sort).** Your normally-graceful friend now appears to be “accident-prone.” Marks that you see on her body don’t match the explanations given (“I just fell down,” when she has a black eye). She may begin wearing long sleeves or high-collared shirts on hot summer days, or wear sunglasses when it’s not particularly sunny, or wear more makeup than usual (to try to cover the marks).

--Adapted from E. Weiss, 2003*

Gently (and sensitively) approach the subject.

Let her know that you do not judge her, but that you genuinely care.

“For an abused woman, leaving the relationship is never a single act. It is always a process. The process of escaping from domestic abuse is one of quiet strengthening. It can happen ever so silently, over such a long period of time, that you will be unaware of it. You may even feel frustrated because your words and actions seem to be having no impact. It seems as though nothing is happening. She looks as though she is a passive participant in her life, willing to swallow whatever her abuser dishes out. But don’t be too sure of that.

...The support you offer, the time you spend listening and reflecting on what you hear, the actions you take, all propel your friend or family member further along in the process of breaking free of abuse and going on with her life.”

--E. Weiss, 2003. **Family and Friends’ Guide to Domestic Violence: How to Listen, Talk and Take Action When Someone You Care About is Being Abused.*