

## **Are You Concerned About Someone Else?**

Are you a “bystander” to someone who is experiencing abuse in a relationship? Are you concerned that a friend, family member, neighbor, co-worker, or someone else is being threatened or harmed by an intimate partner?

If you are aware of someone being abused, it is natural to feel nervous or afraid to get involved. What if I am wrong? What if it is really none of my business? What if I say or do the wrong thing? Could I be placing myself in danger by saying or doing something? Remember that all an abusive person needs the people around him/her to do is nothing. Consider too the message you send to a person living with abuse, if she or he knows you witnessed the behavior and did nothing. The unintentional fuel that bystanders provide to abusers by failing to intervene amounts to a lot of power, when considering the number of people who may come into contact with any two intimate partners.

While sometimes you may witness an abusive incident, at other times you may witness more indirect signs of abuse, such as remarks made about a partner, that give you clues about what may be happening in the relationship. Getting involved when you see signs of abuse happening does not have to mean confronting someone directly about abuse or placing yourself at risk. It may mean calling law enforcement to respond to a dangerous situation. It may mean reaching out to the person being abused and providing resources, or offering to listen. It may mean telling someone “I don’t appreciate that,” when you hear a sexist joke, or other words or actions that support a culture in which domestic abuse and violence are acceptable.

When considering safe ways to intervene, keep in mind that advocates at the domestic violence resource centers are available to talk through options and help you find a way to make a difference in the life of someone affected by abuse.

### **More helpful reading**

- ✓ Helping Her Get Free: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women by Susan Brewster (Seal Press, 2006, original title To Be An Anchor In A Storm)
- ✓ But I Love Him: Protecting Your Teen Daughter from Controlling, Abusive Dating Relationships by Jill Murray (Harper Perennial, 2001)
- ✓ Family and Friends’ Guide to Domestic Violence: How to Listen, Talk and Take Action When Someone You Care About is Being Abused by Elaine Weiss (Volcano Press, 2003)