

**Stay Connected** – Your friend needs you to listen and be supportive. Respond with understanding and empathy, not anger. Your friend may not want help from anyone. Understand what you see or hear may make you frustrated and upset. Don't close the door of communication by threatening to do something they don't want. Also, expect that your friend may share and then not say anything to you for several weeks or even months. Don't pressure them to talk, just let them know you are available when they want to talk.

**Get Support** – Your friend may feel more comfortable talking about the situation with someone anonymously over the phone, in that case, help them reach out to a local domestic or sexual violence organization, or one of the national support helplines listed on the back of this brochure. You can also call the helplines to get support in how to help your friend.

## Where to get help

### Contact your local domestic and sexual violence program

#### National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline:

Text LOVEIS to 22522 or speak to a peer advocate at 1-866-331-9474

#### National Sexual Assault Hotline:

1-800-656-4673

#### Trevor Lifeline (for LGBTQ\* youth):

1-866-488-7386

#### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255 or [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org) to chat with a crisis counselor online

[www.engagingvoices.org](http://www.engagingvoices.org)

A project of the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K019 and 2016-WR-AX-0008 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.

# Support Friends



## Support Friends Who Have Experienced Abusive Relationships or Sexual Assault

When someone is abused or sexually assaulted, they usually tell a friend first, if they tell anyone. Sometimes they don't say anything, but you may notice something is wrong and be worried about them.

While it can be hard to know what to do, you have a lot of influence in encouraging your friend to get the help they need. Here are a few suggestions to help a friend:

**Start the Conversation** – Begin a conversation from a place of concern, avoid judgment or lecturing. Let your friend know what you've noticed and don't be afraid to tell them you're worried. Be sure your friend knows that no one deserves to be hurt and that you aren't blaming them for anything.

**Listen and Be Supportive** – Ask them to share anything they feel comfortable sharing, then really listen. It's not your job to gather all the facts, just to support and listen. Let your friend talk about the abuse or sexual assault in the way that they need to. Make them feel safe with you as the person they choose to talk to and give them time to share their experience.

Know your friend may not recognize their experience as unhealthy or abusive or as a sexual assault. They might be afraid or embarrassed to talk about it, or may even be confused about what happened to them. Also understand that your friend may not realize that coerced sex (when someone manipulates, tricks, or guilted a person into sex) is sexual assault. If your friend didn't want it to happen, then it shouldn't have. If your friend was sexually assaulted, encourage them to seek immediate medical treatment.

**Things To Say** – Encourage your friend to get help from a trusted adult, and help them connect to the resources they need. Don't judge your friend. Here's examples of things to say:

"I'm here for you."

"I'm sorry this happened to you."

"No one deserves to be hurt."

"It's not your fault."

"I am worried about you."

"How can I help?"

"What do you need?"