

There is no easy way...

to spot whether a person is experiencing domestic or sexual abuse. Abuse has a huge emotional impact, women often feel to blame, ashamed, lose confidence and self-esteem.

Women may try to cope in lots of different ways, for example by self-harming or using alcohol and drugs.

Signs to look for are...

- Absence from work, school or social events
- Talking about being scared of their partner or about their partner being angry
- Personality changes (i.e. an outgoing woman becoming withdrawn)
- Repeated unexplained injuries

People often feel awkward...

about 'taking sides' especially if they know both the people involved. Often friends, family and colleagues try to keep out of it, saying it's not really any of their business

Friends, family and colleagues...

may not want to get involved or they may not know how they can help. But ignoring the issues won't help them to

go away. It is important that you do your best to help but remember that stopping the abuse is not your responsibility.

There are things you can do...

- If you think a friend, colleague or loved one is being abused try telling her that you're concerned, say why you're worried and ask if she wants to talk to you about it. Let her know you want to help and are there to listen. You don't have to know all of the answers. The important thing is to break the isolation and to let her know that she is not alone.

- Always prioritise safety-yours and theirs. The abuser won't appreciate you getting involved so be careful about what you do and where and when you do it. Be careful not to intervene personally and phone the police if she is in immediate danger.
- Support your friend in whatever decision she's currently making about her relationship, whilst being clear that the abuse is wrong. Remember, what you are trying to do is be

supportive, not making her feel judged. It's not always easy for women to just leave.

- Stay in contact with her and help her to explore what choices are on offer. Try to focus on her safety rather than the abuser or the relationship. Let her guide you in how best to support her.
- Reassure her that the abuse is not her fault and that you are there for her. Remind her of her strengths, challenge her if she puts

herself down or blames herself, praise her for every step she takes and let her know she has your support.

- If you raise the issue, she may deny or make out it's 'not that bad'. You can let her know that at any time if she wants to speak that you will listen.
- It takes a lot of courage for someone to speak about abuse, if she has told you she is being abused, let her know that you believe her.

Practical tips

Agree a code...

...word or action that if she says to you or you see, you know she's in danger and cannot access help for herself.

Find out...

...information about her rights and the services available - for example, contact specialist support agencies such as

Women's Aid, WRASAC or Barnardo's who can provide practical and emotional support.

Most importantly...

...don't give up on her; you might be her only lifeline! If you are concerned about a colleague speak to your personnel department and find out if you have a workplace policy to support employees that are experiencing abuse. Knowing what help is available

at work can help her to keep safe. You can do this without telling them her name - she might not be ready for other people to know yet.

Get some support...

Get some support for yourself. You have to be strong if you're going to be able to help her. Most domestic abuse services are happy to help with any worries you may have or provide suggestions as to other actions you might take.

Useful phone numbers

24 hour Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline
0808 2000 247

Dundee Women's Aid
01382 207099

Dundee Barnardo's Tayside Domestic Abuse Initiative
01382 596866

Women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (WRASAC)
Dundee
01382 201291

Freephone Rape Crisis National Helpline
08088 01 03 02

Crimestoppers
0800 555 111

Social Work
01382 434350

Police Scotland (Tayside Division)
101 or in an emergency 999

Scottish Women's Aid
www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland
www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk



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Supporting
a friend,
relative or
colleague who
is experiencing
domestic
or sexual
abuse