

# A GUIDE FOR FAMILY & FRIENDS

## Helping a loved one experiencing violence

When someone you care about has experienced domestic or sexual violence, it is hard for friends and family members to know what to do. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider when supporting a survivor in your life.

**Learn the effects of violence.** Share them with your friend in a non-judgmental way that lets them know you are concerned and care.

**Don't give advice or try to "fix" things.** Your loved one doesn't need you to fix what happened. Even if it is done with the best intentions, you should listen without giving advice.

**Listen without judging.** Tell your friend that you care and are willing to listen, no matter what. Believe them without question. In conversation don't dwell on the attack, but rather on how they are handling the trauma.

**Give positive feedback.** Experiencing violence lowers a survivor's self-esteem. Remind your friend of their strengths and abilities and how important they are to you.

**Don't make choices for them.** Don't give ultimatums. Let your friend feel empowered to make choices about their own life. They know their situation best.

**Be patient.** Healing takes time. Don't rush your loved one to be "normal" again. Encourage them to move at their own pace and assure them you will support them no matter what.

**Encourage them to seek help.** If they are interested and open to receiving assistance, tell them about Safe Haven services.

**Seek support for yourself.** Supporting a loved one can be extremely difficult and painful. Safe Haven services are available to individuals supporting survivors, as well as the survivor.



*Ashland County  
Safe Haven*

**Rape Crisis & Domestic  
Violence Services**

**24 HOUR ANONYMOUS HOTLINE:**

**419-289-8085**



*Appleseed*   
Community Mental Health Center

Safe Haven is a program of Appleseed  
Community Mental Health Center.

## Domestic violence and sexual violence are devastating experiences for individuals harmed and for those who are close to them.

Friends and family experience a wide range of emotions and reactions after someone they love is assaulted or abused.

These feelings are normal:

- **Loss** for how your loved one's life has changed.
- **Revenge** towards the person who harmed your loved one.
- **Blame** towards your loved one or individuals around when they were harmed.
- **Guilt** you were not able to protect your loved one.
- **Helplessness** for not knowing what your loved one needs.

If your feelings are inhibiting your ability to support your loved one, communicate with them how you are feeling and let them know that to support them better you need to receive support yourself. Safe Haven services are available to survivors as well as a survivor's friends and family. The anonymous hotline is available 24/7.

### Some helpful statements include:

- I believe you.
- This is not your fault.
- I am so sorry this happened.
- You did not deserve this.
- I am happy that you are safe and that you are here to talk with me.
- Thank you for being brave/comfortable enough to talk with me.
- How can I help you right now?
- I don't have any answers, but I can sit here and give you my full support.

### State and National Resources

- Ohio Domestic Violence Network: [www.odvn.org](http://www.odvn.org)
- Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence: [www.oaesv.org](http://www.oaesv.org)
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)
- National Network to End Domestic Violence: [www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Dating Violence Textline: Text LOVEIS to 22522
- National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

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

Follow us at RCDVSafeHaven   

*This publication was supported by Rape Crisis Trust Fund Grant 2019RCC02 awarded by the Ohio Attorney General's Office. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are of those author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ohio Attorney General's Office.*