

USU SAAVI Office  
[Sexual Assault & Anti-Violence Information](#)  
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[www.usu.edu/saavi](http://www.usu.edu/saavi)

## Helping a Victim of Dating or Domestic Violence

It's easy to stand outside of an abusive relationship and offer simplistic advice, like: "If you'd just do this and this, then your problems would be over!" Relationships are a complicated web of needs and perceptions and personalities. Don't fall into a judgmental mode. Instead, prepare yourself to be helpful by getting into a mindset of empathy, patience, and understanding. Try to adhere to the following helping guidelines:

- Listen, believe, and validate the victim. Tell them you care and want them to be safe.
- Do not ask blaming questions. (i.e., don't ask, "What did you do or say to provoke your partner to such violence?" or "Why don't you just break up with your partner?") Victims are not responsible for someone else's choices or violence and do not need more shame.
- Do not be critical of the abusive partner. Instead make a firm statement that violence under any circumstance is unacceptable.
- Do not assume that the victim wants to leave the relationship, or that you know what is best for them.
- Do not try to force the couple apart. It may be difficult for the victim to leave the relationship for many reasons, (i.e., he/she doesn't know how to be consistently assertive, he/she doesn't feel like they deserve any better, he/she may not recognize that abuse is wrong, emotional bonds of love or dependency to the abuser may be strong, he/she feels excessive hope or fear, or he/she feels trapped.)
- Don't pressure the victim to make quick decisions.
- Become a comfort zone for the victim. Assure the victim that their conversation with you will not be revealed to the abuser.
- If necessary, assist the victim in getting legal help or other sources of protection (i.e., protective order, restraining order, changing current phone number, etc.).
- Be aware of advocacy agencies that are available to assist and support victims of relationship violence (i.e., USU SAAVI Office, CAPSA, etc.).

- Offer to go with the victim to get help (i.e., victim advocacy agency, medical assistance, counseling, or to tell family members).
- If the victim is still in high school, work with school administration to modify the couple's schedules to prevent any physical or visual contact.
- Call the police if you witness an assault.

Adapted from:  
Salt Lake Area Domestic Violence Coalition  
Teen Dating Violence Training Toolbox