

Name: _____

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

As a friend, you may witness abusive behavior first-hand or you may notice indirect signs that lead you to suspect that your friend is in an abusive dating relationship—a change in your friend’s clothes or makeup style, lowered self-esteem, or a change in the amount of time she spends with her boyfriend. If you suspect a friend is being abused, you can help her by showing that you care. Let her speak confidentially about her situation. You may be the only person with whom she feels comfortable. You can help a friend in these ways:

- Do not ignore the signs of abuse. Talk to your friend.
- Express your concerns. Tell your friend you are worried and why.
- Help your friend recognize the abuse for what it is; point out that her partner’s behavior is not normal or acceptable. If she says, “It’s really not that bad,” tell her it is serious and will most likely only get worse.
- Do not blame your friend. Assure her that she is not responsible for the abuse. You can never make someone else hurt you.
- Listen to your friend’s feelings.
- Do not judge your friend.
- Believe her.
- Do not minimize her struggle.
- Point out your friend’s strengths, gifts and positive qualities.
- Let her know that she doesn’t deserve to be treated badly.
- Be supportive as she gets over the relationship.
- Offer to go to counseling sessions with her.
- Encourage your friend to confide in a trusted adult.
- For your safety and the safety of your friend, never put yourself in a dangerous situation with the victim’s partner. **DO NOT** confront the abuser or try to mediate.
- Call the police if you witness an assault.
- If you suspect abuse but do not witness it, tell an adult you trust such as a parent or a school principal, nurse or guidance counselor.