



# HOW TO... HELP SOMEONE LIVING WITH VIOLENCE



DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE  
WHO IS **LIVING WITH VIOLENCE?**  
**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

TWO-THIRDS OF CANADIANS KNOW A WOMAN  
WHO HAS EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE.

Every six days, another woman in Canada is murdered by her current or former partner. Every night, more than 3,300 women (along with their 3,000 children) are forced to sleep in a women's shelter or transition house because it's not safe for them at home.

*If you know someone who is experiencing violence,  
this tip sheet will help you take effective action.*

This is one in a series of tip sheets created by the Canadian Women's Foundation in partnership with The Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses. Funding for this project has been provided by The AVON Foundation for Women

To learn more, please visit [canadianwomen.org/AVON](http://canadianwomen.org/AVON)

AVON



# WHAT YOU CAN DO:

**BE SUPPORTIVE.** The most important thing you can do is listen and offer your nonjudgmental support. Tell them the violence is not their fault, and that they deserve to be treated with respect, no matter what. Let them know you do not blame them. If they decide to stay, do not judge them. The most valuable things you can offer a woman who is being abused are respect, taking her seriously and linking her to where she can get help.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE.

Can you recognize the warning signs of abuse? Do you understand why many people don't press charges against their abusers? To learn more, read our Fact Sheet at [canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence](http://canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence) and check out the Resources, below.

**BE AWARE OF THE RISKS.** Since many abusers closely monitor their victims (where they go, who they see, phone calls, email, Facebook, etc) small acts such as leaving someone a voice message may place them in danger. It pays to be careful about how you communicate with the victim.

**ENSURE YOUR OWN SAFETY.** Never confront an abuser or do anything that puts you in danger or feels unsafe. Take care of yourself by talking through your feelings about the issue with a supportive, knowledgeable friend or professional.

**FIND RESOURCES.** Before speaking to a victim, get the phone number of your local shelter, crisis line, YWCA, or agency offering specialized services for victims of abuse (see Resources, below). This way you can provide specific information, if and when they are ready.

**CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE.** Be thoughtful about where and when to discuss your concerns. Choose a place where you will not be overheard or interrupted, and where they will have privacy. Don't choose a time when you feel unprepared, or when they seem distracted or are in a hurry.

**VOICE YOUR CONCERNS.** Be sensitive. Say something like: "I want to talk to you about something. I will keep this confidential, and will not repeat anything you say. I am concerned that you are in abusive relationship. Is there anything I can do?" Don't give details about what you have witnessed or why you are concerned - they may feel they need to give excuses or deny what happened. Simply repeat that you want to support the victim. If they don't want to talk about it, just say, "If you want to talk another time, I'm here and am ready to listen."

**PUT THEM IN CHARGE.** Don't expect to know all the answers. Explore options with them. Don't try to take over or tell them what to do. Tell them: "I won't make you do anything you don't want to do." Ask direct, simple questions such as: "Do you want me to help you find someone to talk to?" or "Do you want to go somewhere safe?" If they aren't sure what to do, simply encourage them to talk, and listen without judgment.



IF SOMEONE  
IS IN IMMEDIATE  
DANGER,  
CALL 911

## RESOURCES

### SERVICES

**Crisis Lines:** Many communities (and some women's shelters) have a 24-hour telephone crisis line. These services are confidential—you don't need to give your name or phone number. They will listen, answer your questions, and refer you to the services you're looking for. Look in the front of your phone book, or search online for crisis lines in your community.

**Women's Shelters/Transition Houses:** A women's shelter, sometimes called a transition house, is a special, secure residence designed especially for women who are escaping abusive relationships. They offer women and their children a safe place to sleep, food, clothes, and

basic supplies. They also provide counseling, safety planning, and can help women to find housing, employment training, legal support, advice on immigration issues, and other community resources. Look in the front of your phone book, or search online for women's shelters or transition houses in your community.

If you are in an area that has no shelter or transition house, find out about other agencies offering specialised services for victims of abuse in the phone book, or search online.

For a full list of services for victims of violence in your community, please visit [women.gc.ca/violence](http://women.gc.ca/violence) and click on: 'Help In Your Area.'

### WEBSITES

**women.gc.ca/violence** - This Federal government website offers information and lists of community services in each province and territory.

**neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca** - This Ontario-based website will help you to recognize the signs of woman abuse, learn what to do about it, learn how to create a safety plan, and much more.

**ywca.ca** - The YWCA offers programs for women—including shelters, counseling, and employment programs—in nine provinces and one territory.

**kanawayhitowin.ca** - This website is part of a campaign to reduce woman abuse in Aboriginal communities in Ontario. It includes information for women experiencing abuse, their communities, and front line workers.

**endvaw.ca** - This national network of women's shelters helps to ensure that women and children who use these services receive the most effective, compassionate support possible. They offer a portal to women's shelter organizations across Canada.