



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

How do I know I am being abused?

There are two main ways that you can tell if you are being abused:

1. If someone is saying things to you that you feel are offensive to you and your integrity and are hurting your feelings. The abuser may also ridicule or name-call, intimidate, harass, or stalk you. That is VERBAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL and EMOTIONAL abuse.
2. If someone is touching you in a way that is undignified, harmful – e.g. hitting, forcing you to have sex, pulling hair, grabbing or smacking you. The abuser may also damage your property or enter your residence without your permission. That is all PHYSICAL abuse.

Nobody has the right to hit, push, shove, shake, kick, slap or punch you.

If they love you, they would not harm you. If they respect you, they will not treat you with indignity and disrespect.

What do I do if I am being abused?

- **Don't suffer in silence:** If you are being physically, psychologically (mentally), emotionally or sexually abused, it is important that you seek help. You do not have to continue to suffer in silence.
- **Talk to someone you can trust:** confide in a friend, a neighbour, a relative, a spiritual leader or elder, a doctor, or a counsellor.
- **It is not your fault:** There is no excuse for any form of abuse and you do not have to put up with it. Both physical and emotional abuse is against the law and help is available through the legal system.
- **You can get help:** You can use the legal system to help you.
 - Go to the Domestic Violence Court closest to you and apply for a Protection Order.
 - Lay a criminal charge against the abuser, for example rape, sexual assault or physical violence

What are the signs that my friend is being abused?

- unexplained bruises, broken bones, sprains, or marks
- excessive guilt or shame for no apparent reason
- secrecy or withdrawal from friends and family
- avoidance of school or social events with excuses that don't seem to make any sense

How do I help an abused friend?

- **Listen:** A person who is being abused needs someone to empathetically listen to and believe him or her.
- **It is not his/her fault:** Help your friend understand that it is not his or her fault and that they are not the bad person but the abuser/perpetrator.
- **Encourage him/her to seek help:** Your friend also needs your encouragement to get help immediately from an adult, such as a parent, family member, or guidance counsellor.
- **If a friend has been raped:** Encourage the friend to go to a hospital within 72 hours to test for HIV. The hospital may start them on a short course of antiretroviral treatment that can reduce chances of getting HIV and report the matter to the police

How do I help an abused child?

- Talk to them gently
- Don't interrogate. Let the child explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't interrogate the child.
- Assure them they are not in trouble and that you will keep them safe.
- Tell them that you believe them and DO so
- Contact your nearest social worker and report the case
- Call Child line where you can report the case anonymously

Who do I call if someone I know is being abused?

- Gender-based Violence Helpline: 0800 428 428 / *120*7867 from any cell phone
- Childline: 0800 055 555
- SAPS Crime Stop: 08600 10111
- AIDS Helpline: 0800 012 322 / 011 725 6710

How can I stop abusing my partner/child?

- Acknowledge that what you are doing is wrong (no matter the degree).
- Stop rationalizing abusive treatment of other people as acceptable.
- Abuse is NEVER healthy or acceptable regardless of the messages you may have been taught or witnessed in the past.

- If alcohol makes you more likely to commit violence, stop or reduce.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs in dealing with your problems.
- Exercise and listen to soothing music to deal with stress.
- Walk away from the confrontation until you are calmed down
- Go to the family elders, trusted friend, neighbour, church elders and community leaders for mediation of disputes.
- Seek professional assistance of a psychologist or other professionals.

Who can I call to help me stop my abusive behaviour?

- ★ Gender-based Violence Helpline: 0800 428 428 / *120*7867 from any cell phone
- ★ Stop Gender-based Violence Helpline: 0800 003 081
- ★ Suicide Helpline: 0800 567 567

REMEMBER

Despite the fact that there is no time limit on reporting rape or laying a charge, it is however advisable that reporting rape or laying a charge be done as soon as possible. It is easier to get evidence needed for the court case when the rape or any abuse is reported as soon as possible to ensure that the perpetrator is arrested. However, if the sexual crime was a sexual assault rather than rape, you have 20 years within which to lay a charge of sexual assault. Even though the delays in reporting may no longer be used against you in court, forensic evidence (physical evidence such as semen and hair left on your body after the rape) may be lost. When raped, do not wash before reporting to the police station or presenting yourself to the nearest clinic for forensic evidence to be collected and preserved.

Violence against women and children is never acceptable, never excusable, and never tolerable.