



SUPPORT FOR... **ABUSED** WOMEN



ARE YOU BEING **ABUSED?** HELP IS AVAILABLE.

ABUSE IS ALWAYS WRONG.
NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO HARM YOU.

Abuse takes many forms. The harm you experience may be physical, sexual, emotional, financial or spiritual. Your abuser may be your spouse, someone you're dating, a family member, a caregiver, or a friend. Sometimes the abuse follows a pattern, sometimes it doesn't. The abuse may happen every day or occasionally. It doesn't matter—abuse is always wrong.

*If you think you are experiencing abuse,
this tip sheet will help you learn more.*

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



AVON
SAFE & SOUND PROGRAM

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

IS IT REALLY ABUSE? Strange as it sounds, sometimes it's hard to recognize you are being abused. Many abusers say things like, "You are useless," or "You made me do this," or "It's your own fault," or "You deserve it." All of these statements are intended to destroy your self-confidence and blame you for the abuse. The experience of being abused causes emotional harm that makes it difficult to see what's really going on. To learn the signs of abuse, read "The Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship" (see Resources).

STAY OR GO? There are many reasons why women stay in an abusive relationship. Maybe you've stayed because you are financially dependent on the abuser and cannot afford to leave. Maybe you love the abuser and don't want to leave the relationship—you just want the violence to stop. Perhaps you blame yourself. You may be physically dependent on the abuser. Maybe your abuser has threatened to kill you if you leave. Every woman has her own reasons, and every woman has the right to make her own decisions. But no matter how hopeless or trapped or frightened you feel, help is available.

TELL SOMEONE. Tell someone you trust about the abuse. This might be a friend, family member, teacher, nurse or doctor, or someone from your faith community. Before speaking to them, decide what you want them to do. Do you just want them to listen? Do you want help finding a lawyer or a new place to live? Think about what you want, then ask for it. If they try to pressure you into doing something that makes you uncomfortable or afraid, speak up. Tell them

how this makes you feel. Ask them to respect your wishes. Only you can decide if and when you should leave. If they downplay the abuse, don't believe you, or refuse to help, tell someone else.

DISCOVER YOUR OPTIONS. Before taking action, call a crisis line or women's shelter to find out your options. They will help you create a safety plan and learn about your rights. Abusers often lie to control their victims, so you cannot rely on what they say. For example, abusers often threaten to take custody of children or have someone deported when they actually have no such power. Make a list of your questions, then talk to an expert.

PROTECT YOURSELF. If you decide to leave the abuser, create a safety plan. Abusers often become more violent if they believe their victims are planning to leave. Take precautions to ensure they do not learn about your plans through voice messages, emails, texts, or your internet use. Your safety plan should include strategies for staying safe at every stage: while you are still in the relationship; as you prepare to leave; your actual departure; and afterwards. To learn more about safety planning, talk to a shelter or visit neighboursfriendsandfamily.ca (see Resources).



IF YOU
ARE IN IMMEDIATE
DANGER,
CALL 911

RESOURCES

COMMUNITY 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: A women's shelter is a special, secure residence designed especially for women who are escaping violence. Shelters offer women and their children a place to sleep, food, clothes, and basic supplies. They also provide counseling and safety planning, and can help women to find housing, employment training, legal support, advice on immigration issues, and other community services. Look in the front of your phone book, or search online for shelters in your community.

TIP SHEETS

The Warning Signs of an Abusive Relationship: Read our blog post about recognizing the signs that you may be in a controlling or abusive relationship. canadianwomen.org/blog/warning-signs-abusive-relationship

Why Women Stay in Abusive Relationships: Read our blog post about the many different reasons why women stay in abusive relationships. canadianwomen.org/blog/why-women-stay-abusive-relationships

WEBSITES

neighboursfriendsandfamily.ca – For advice on creating a safety plan, click on "Safety planning for women who are abused" in the right-hand column.

sheltersafe.ca – To get help in your region of Canada, click on the link in your province. They directly point to information on local resources including telephone help-lines and women's shelters and transition houses by jurisdiction.

<http://justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/fv-vf/help-aide.html> – This Federal government website offers general information on family violence, where to get help in your community, plus information about child custody.

women.gc.ca/violence – This Federal government website has a list of community services in each province and territory. Click on: 'Help In Your Area.'