

SURVIVOR'S HANDBOOK

A RESOURCE FOR SURVIVORS AND THEIR
SUPPORTERS BY FAMILY CRISIS SERVICES

Family Crisis Services in Canon City, Colorado has over 40 years' experience advocating for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault survivors. We are dedicated to providing justice and safety through advocacy, support and education.

This handbook is written for domestic violence survivors. Our hope is that you find the support you need and that you can move forward in a way that leads to safety and peace. Family and friends desiring to help and understand will also find this handbook helpful.

We recognize that leaving an abusive relationship can be difficult and even dangerous. We hope that this handbook will provide insight and ideas to help you create your plan. Whether you choose to leave or stay, we support you.

If you think you may be the victim of domestic violence, please seek help from a Domestic Violence Advocate. If you are local (Fremont or Custer Counties in Colorado) call us at 719-275-2429. You can also find help in your area at thehotline.org. If you feel you are in a life-threatening situation, please call 911.

No one deserves to be abused. Abuse is **never** OK. We need to change the common narrative that there is something that victims do that causes them to be harmed. Abusers are 100% responsible for their actions.

To all the survivors: you did not deserve what was done to you. There is nothing wrong with you that brought on the abuse. You are very much worthy of love and safety and peace in life. Our mission here at Family Crisis Services is to support you and bring awareness to domestic violence in a way that creates positive change for the future.

For more information you can visit our website: familycrisonline.org

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic abuse/violence, also called intimate partner violence, is a pattern of behavior in any relationship, present or past, that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone.

Every year in America, 10 million women and men are victims of domestic violence and each day over 20,000 calls are made to domestic violence hotlines across the country. Clearly, this is a crisis in our country, as well as around the world.

Types of Domestic Violence:

Emotional and Verbal Abuse is undermining a person's self-worth through constant criticism. It is meant to control, scare, or isolate a person. It lowers the victim's sense of identity and self-worth and can cause a decline in their mental health. Here are some examples:

- Humiliating the victim in public or in private
 - Name calling, shaming, put-downs, blaming
 - Intimidating or threats of harm
 - Isolating from supportive family and friends
 - Demanding all time be spent together
 - Intense jealousy
 - Monitoring the victim's schedule or their movements, monitoring victim's technology, using GPS to track
 - Criticizing, ridiculing, using guilt, manipulating
 - Dismissing or invalidating the victim's feelings or needs, or who they are as a person
 - Threatening to kill themselves
 - Deny or lying about an event
 - Withholding affection or giving the silent treatment as punishment
 - Treating victim like a possession or property
 - Expecting the victim to ask for permission
 - Damaging a partner's relationship with the children
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- Refusing to take part in the relationship
- Telling victim their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and/or values are invalid, illogical or “don’t make sense”.

Physical Abuse is injury or trauma to the body that is deliberately caused. Here are some examples:

- Punching, hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, biting, cutting, stabbing, shooting, etc.
- Suffocating, strangling (sometimes called choking), scalding, burning
- Physically restraining or trapping in a room/closet, holding hostage, forcing drugs, or giving them without the victim’s knowledge
- Withholding food or medical care
- Hitting walls, kicking down doors, throwing objects, destroying property
- Threatening with a weapon or physical assault (this includes threatening to harm children and pets)
- Scares you by driving recklessly

Sexual Abuse is any non-consensual and/or non-sober sexual act. It can involve pressure or coercion and is often forced. This type of abuse frequently takes place in intimate relationships, including marriage.

Here are some examples:

- Forcing or manipulating victim into having sex or perform sexual acts
- Holding a victim down during sex
- Insulting in sexual ways or calling explicit names
- Choking or restraining during sex without consent
- Hurting with weapons or objects during sex
- Involving other people in sexual acts without consent
- Ignoring victim’s feelings about sex
- Forcing to watch or make porn
- Attempting to give victim an STI
- Wants you do dress in a sexual way

Financial Abuse is a way to keep a victim financially unstable as well as keeping them dependent. Financial abuse makes it difficult for a victim to leave an abuser in order to gain safety. Here are some examples:

- Controlling use or access to money
 - Taking victim’s money, credit cards, or paycheck
 - Hiding or taking funds
 - Refusing to work or contribute to household budget
 - Sabotaging victim’s work responsibilities (examples are calling and texting incessantly or unhooking car battery to prevent a person from getting to work)
 - Hiding or stealing funds
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Stalking is a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention intended to harass, annoy or terrorize a person.

Stalking usually escalates. Here are some examples:

- Mailing multiple cryptic messages or stealing mail
- Hang up phone calls or repeated calls
- Following victim in car or on foot
- Harassing phone calls or texts
- Leaving things, such as flowers or notes on doorstep or vehicle
- Watching victim from a distance
- Hiding in order to spy on victim
- Trespassing on or vandalizing property
- Violation of order of protection
- Monitoring partner through technology, such as social media, hacking into accounts and/or GPS.

Pet Abuse is when an abuser uses pets to coerce and control a victim. A beloved pet is like a family member and can, unfortunately, be used as a powerful tool in domestic abuse. Of course, these actions are a part of domestic violence, but are also animal abuse in themselves. Some signs of an abused pet include a tucked tail, flinching at human contact, unexplained fractures, unprovoked aggression, overly submissive, being left in a kennel or chained outside exclusively. Here are some ways an abuser uses a pet to control the victim:

- Threatening to harm, kill or get rid of a pet.
- Not allowing basic pet care such as feeding and access to an area to go to the bathroom.
- Not allowing money to be spent on the pet for basic items such as food or veterinary care.
- Threatening to get rid of a service or emotional support animal that is vital to the victim's wellbeing.
- Treating the animal better than partner and/or children.

Religious Abuse is using scripture and/or traditions to force or coerce a victim to submit or behave.

- Using scripture and/or traditions to encourage someone to submit.
 - Ridiculing or insulting the other person's religion or spiritual beliefs.
 - Isolating you from your faith community or not allowing a person to practice their beliefs.
 - Using the faith community to encourage someone to stay in an abusive relationship.
 - Using scripture to blame the victim or justify the abuse.
 - Using scripture or traditions to limit access to health care.
 - Using scripture or traditions to control a victim's sexuality and/or reproduction.
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WHY DO VICTIMS STAY?

This is a common question that people ask about abusive relationships and victims often ask themselves this same question. A victim's reasons for staying with an abuser are extremely complex.

This question is why it is so important to believe the person who says they are being abused. Quite often, they are questioned, blamed, and left to fend for themselves when they do seek help. This can leave them stuck in a situation with nowhere to go and no one left to support them.

When a victim reaches out, it might be their first-time seeking help. They are generally scared and wary as to what your reaction might be. Shutting them down by questioning them could cause them to retreat into secrecy and hesitancy to reach out again.

Keep in mind that victims often feel “confused” about the state of their relationship. Often, they spend so much time trying to figure out what they are doing wrong, that they have a hard time seeing the abuse for what it is.

Domestic violence occurs in relationships across all income levels, races, genders, and religions. It is common to think that it only happens to “certain people” but that is far from true.

It is helpful to call your local Domestic Violence Center for help in supporting a victim. They will be able to provide insight on what domestic violence is, how to help, and how to create a safety plan. A safety plan is vital because the end of the relationship can be the most violent and dangerous part.

Keep in mind that on average, it takes a victim 7 exit attempts before they leave and never return to the abusive relationship.

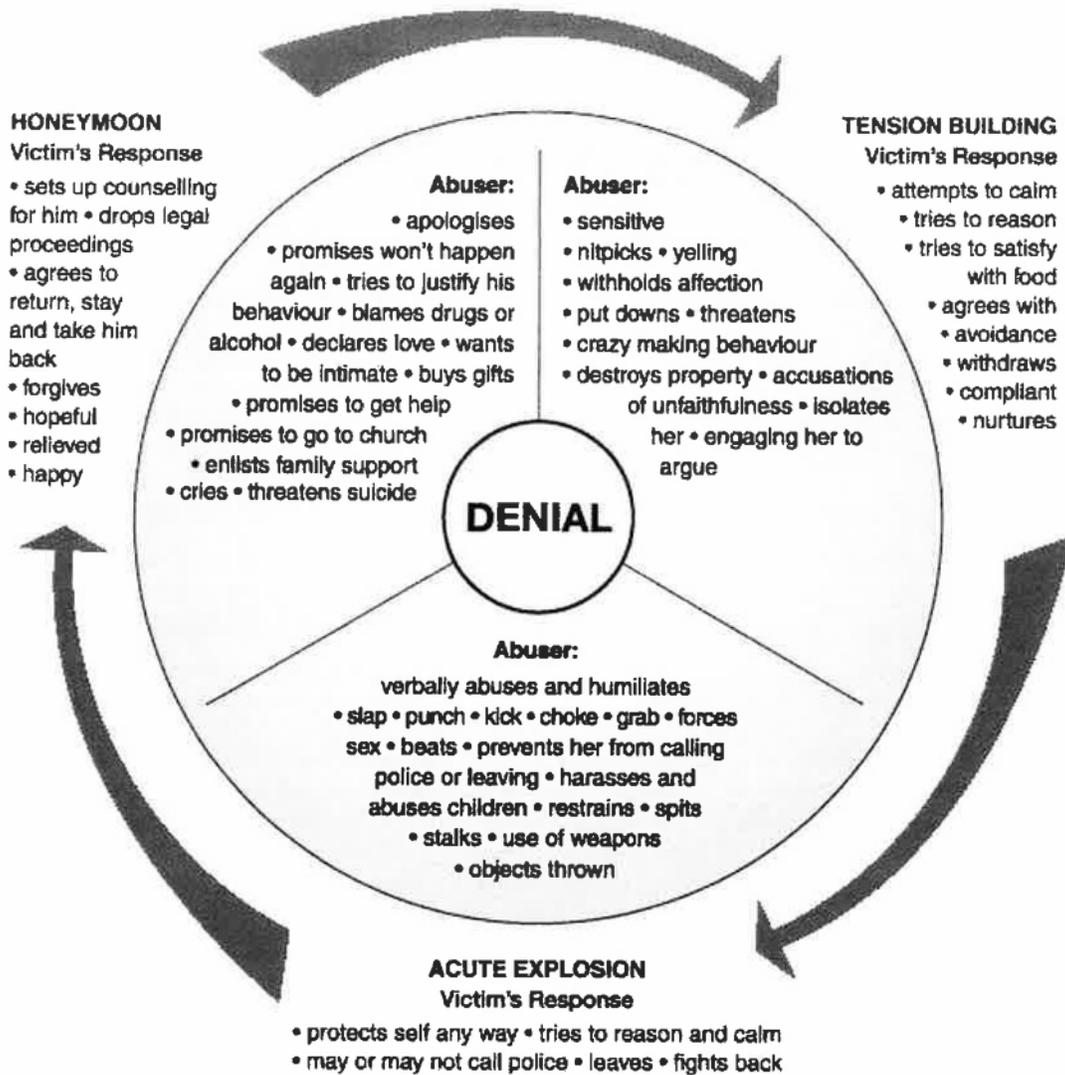
Here are some common reasons victims stay with their abusers but keep in mind there are more than what are listed here:

- **FEAR** - It is well-documented that victims are at the highest risk of injury when they are leaving. Increased threats of violence often convince a person to stay. The threat of bodily and emotional harm is powerful, and abusers use this to control and keep victims trapped.
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- **CONTROL** - A victim might feel more control over the decision to stay in a relationship than to leave. They know what to expect from the abuser as far as their moods and how to behave in the least triggering way. Victims often fear (for good reason) that their abuser will lash out at friends or family if they leave.
- **DAMAGED SELF-WORTH** - A victim feels beaten down, making it seem impossible to start fresh.
- **CHILDREN** - A victim will often stay in a relationship because of the children. An abuser often threatens to keep the children from the victim or threatens violence toward them.
- **ISOLATION** - An abuser often uses tactics to keep their partner away from family and friends. This leaves a victim without resources and a safe place, and, ultimately, without choices.
- **FINANCES** - Many victims lack the means to support themselves. Often an abuser will force a victim to quit their job or not allow them to work at all. Lack of access to household money is also an issue. The cost of leaving can be prohibitive when you consider kids, pets, transportation, housing, etc.
- **PROMISES OF CHANGE** - Abusers tend to make lots of promises of change and new behavior. They apologize and appear repentant, but that only lasts until the next violent outburst.
- **RELIGION** - A victim often feels pressure from a faith community and/or scriptures to stay in an abusive relationship. Leaving can often mean shunning from the community.
- **LOVE** - Love is usually present at the start of a relationship. Over time, as violence starts happening, the victim's feelings of love might not change. They might feel that with enough love, the abuser will change. And if there is a power dynamic in the relationship, the victim will feel responsible for the abuse and spend their time trying to "behave" to receive better treatment and be a better partner.

If someone in your life says they are being abused, believe them. The best way to support them is to listen, partner with them in finding help, and respect the choices they make for themselves, even if you don't approve of their choices.

If you think you may be the victim of domestic violence, please seek help from a Domestic Violence Advocate. If you are local (Fremont or Custer Counties in Colorado) call us at 719-275-2429. You can also find help in your area at thehotline.org. If you feel you are in a life-threatening situation, please call 911.



HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE AN ABUSER?

Anyone can be an abuser. Abusers are not confined to one gender, race, religion, or sector of society. Many abusers are only abusive with their current or past intimate partners, and it is common for people outside of the relationship to not notice the abusive side of their personality. There are, however, some traits that many abusers have that you can pay attention to.

Traits of an Abuser:

- Abusers deny or minimize the seriousness of violence on the victim and other family members.
- Abusers objectify the victim and view them as their property or sexual object.
- Abusers may appear successful but, internally, they have low self-esteem and feel powerless or inadequate.
- Abusers put the blame on others or on circumstances. For example, they may blame a violent outburst on stress, their partner's behavior, having a difficult day, drugs, alcohol, or other factors.
- Abusers do not respect your privacy.
- Abusers do not call you by your name.

Warning Signs of an Abuser:

Think of these as red flags, pink flags, and/or warning signs

- Extreme jealousy
 - Possessiveness
 - Unpredictability
 - A bad temper or mood swings
 - Controlling behavior
 - Threatening
 - Demeaning or humiliating the victim
 - Sabotaging the victim's ability to make personal choices
 - Rigid or antiquated beliefs about male and female roles in relationships
 - Cruelty to animals
 - Rushing the relationship
 - Isolating the victim
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- Discount the word “NO”
- Doesn't respect your property or privacy
- Using “we” or “us” to establish premature trust at the very beginning of the relationship
- Hyper-sensitive to anything perceived as criticism
- Charming
- Gaslighting
- Past abusiveness

If these signs are present in your relationship, you will benefit by seeking help from a professional advocate, therapist or counselor. It is often hard to tell what is “wrong” in an abusive relationship due to confusion from emotional, verbal, and mental manipulation. Telling your story to someone who knows the signs of domestic violence will put you on a path towards freedom and healing.

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POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL

Let's look at a POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL. It will help us to get a clearer look at how abuse plays out in a relationship.

Please note that the wheel uses heteronormative pronouns, but abuse shows up in all types of relationships.

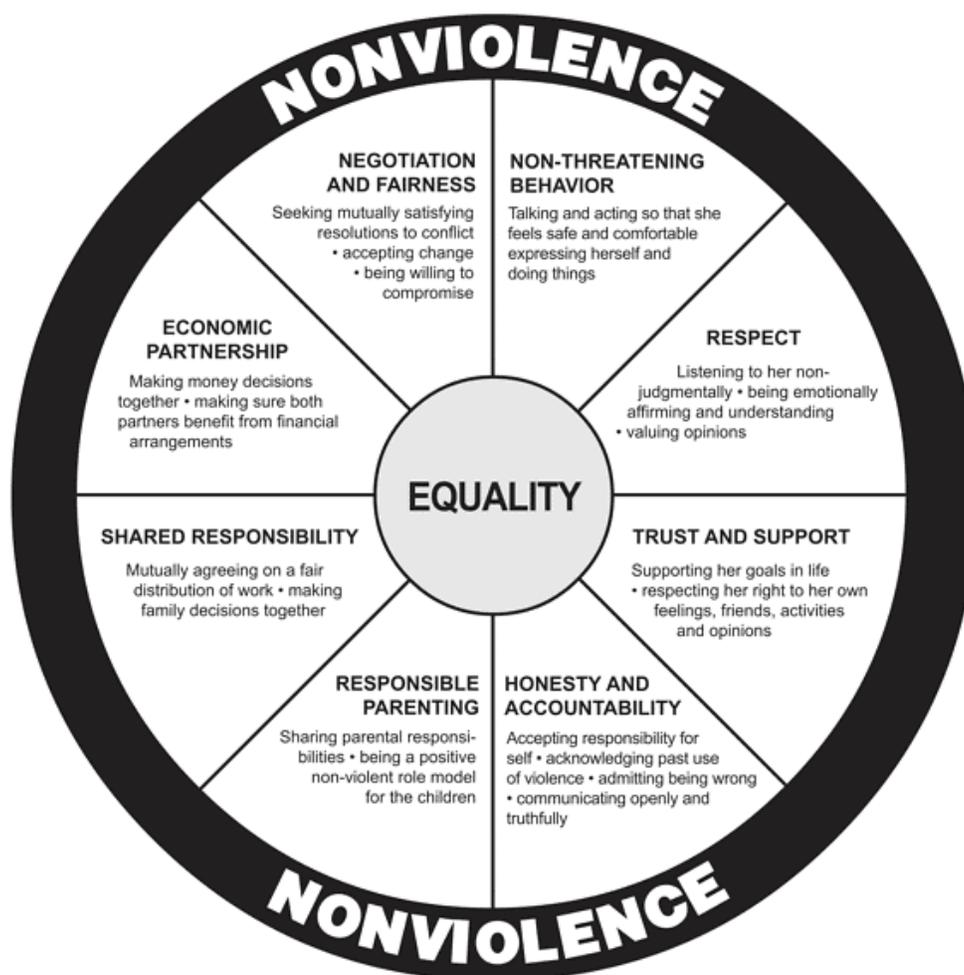
On the wheel, you will notice that abuse escalates and expands. Typically, it starts small and grows. This creates the cycle that keeps a victim trapped and confused in a toxic relationship.



EQUALITY WHEEL

The EQUALITY WHEEL shows healthy behaviors in relationships. There is no one person in charge and both partners have a voice.

Please note that the wheel uses heteronormative pronouns, but healthy behaviors show up in all types of relationships.



HOW TO CREATE A SAFETY PLAN

Preparing a Safety Plan is vital in a domestic violence situation. Your plan will help you keep yourself and your kids as safe as possible and potentially become a plan to exit the relationship.

Your local domestic violence center has advocates who can help you create your safety plan. If you are in Fremont/Custer County, call us at 719-275-2429 or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1800-799-7233 to find an agency near you.

Your Safety Plan can either be made to reflect your decision to stay in the relationship or leave the relationship. You are the best decision-maker in your situation. You will know what needs to happen when the time comes.

Adding a plan for escalated violence is important for either scenario. Once you have a plan in place, you will be able to think more clearly and make better decisions in the moment. Keep in mind that your Safety Plan is for you and should not be shared with your partner. If you have a trusted family member or friend (NOT a mutual family member or friend), they can be aware and a part of your plan.

Do your children know how to call 911? Teach them when to call, how to call, and what information to give (description of the incident, address, full name).

- Always keep some money in your emergency bag or on your person. This will be especially helpful if your exit becomes an emergency.
 - Pack an emergency bag for yourself and your children. Hide it somewhere safe (mutual friends and family should not be considered safe when you are leaving).
 - It is important to document all abuse, stalking and harassment. Take pictures, screenshots and keep track of dates and times of incidents. Document any damage to the house or car as well. Starting a private email account on a library computer will help to keep information safe. All photos need to be kept in their original condition - no photoshopping.
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What belongs in your emergency bag? Here is a list of items you will want to consider and plan for ahead of time:

- Driver's License/Registration/Insurance
- Medical Insurance Card
- Your own personal Credit Cards
- List of phone numbers (mutual friends and family are not safe at this time)
- Financial records (bank statements, income assistance documentation, tax records, etc.)
- Court Orders/Protection Orders
- Work Permit/Green Card
- Birth certificates
- Medications and/or prescriptions
- Keys for home, car, safety deposit box, etc.
- Clothes and toiletries
- Special significance items for you and your children (For example your grandmother's wedding ring or a child's favorite stuffed animal)
- Pictures of spouse and children

Feel free to add to this list any items you know you need/want to have with you. Thinking ahead will make at least this part of your plan happen fairly easily.

Another consideration is to start your own private bank account. A separate bank from the one your partner uses will be best. This way you can add money to the account before an emergency comes up. A little bit of money each week adds up over time.

HOW DO I HELP SOMEONE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

It takes courage for someone to step forward and talk about an abusive relationship or a domestic violence situation. When someone you know opens up, you will probably find yourself not knowing what to say or do. This is 100% normal and you can still help someone navigate this difficult road without having all of the answers. The best thing to offer a victim is a loving, safe, and supportive space.

Keep in mind that when a victim comes forward, they already have a difficult time trusting themselves due to control and manipulation. Let them speak without judgment or blame. The victim is generally worried that no one will believe them and if you validate that fear by not believing them, they may shut down and stop seeking help.

Getting out of and healing from an abusive relationship can be a long road and you are, possibly, the first step in someone's journey.

Here are some tips for supporting the victim:

Listen to the victim's story by allowing them to talk freely and openly. Coming forward to let you in on what is happening can be very difficult for the victim. The shame and isolation that usually accompanies an abusive relationship is hard to overcome. Reaching out to you is a huge first step that most likely feels precarious and highly uncertain. Here are some things you can say to make space for the victim's story:

- "I know this is scary, but I am here for you."
- "You are not alone. I will be here for you in this process."
- "I will listen without judgment."
- "You're brave for seeking support."

Validate what the victim is feeling and what they are reporting. Minimizing the victim's experience or questioning what they did to cause the violence is re-victimizing to the victim. They need a listening ear at this point. Here are some important things to say to validate the victim's feelings and their story:

- "I believe you."
- "I am sorry this happened to you."
- "You did not deserve what happened to you."
- "You are not alone. I am here for you."
- "No one deserves to be treated this way."

Ask the victim how you can help them. Respect their wishes if they do not want to alert the authorities or press charges. Do not pressure the victim to leave the situation. This can be traumatic and cause the victim to retreat from your help. Search locally for a domestic violence advocacy center if you do not know where to start.

Here are some ways to offer help:

- "How would you like to go forward in this situation?"
- "Let's look for resources you can consider."
- "What do you need from me?"
- "Are you safe now? Do we need to find a safe place for you?"

Support the victim's decisions. A pivotal part of a victim moving forward is making their own decisions for their future. You may feel compelled to advise the victim, but it is in their best interest to make their own choices about their situation. Pointing out their options and writing out a "pro" and "con" list together, all while letting them make their own decisions, is the best support you can give. Here is what that might sound like:

- "What do you want to do?"
- "How can I best support that decision?"

One challenge you might run into is that the victim may want to go back into the relationship. Keep in mind that this is their choice. An abusive relationship can be very difficult to leave for a number of reasons. The victim will know when it is time and what that looks like. You can ask how you can support them and offer to help them create a safety plan.

IF YOU ARE GOING TO HELP ME...

- Please be patient while I decide if I can trust you.
 - Let me tell you my story. The whole story. In my own way.
 - Please accept that whatever I may have done, whatever I may do is the best I have to offer and seemed right at the time.
 - I am not "a" person, I am THIS person, unique and special. I am not what is happening to me.
 - Do not judge me as right or wrong, good, or bad. I am what I am, and this is all I have got.
 - Do not assume that your knowledge about me is accurate. You only know what I have told you. That is only part of me.
 - Do not ever think that you know what I should do. I may be confused but I am still the expert about me.
 - Do not place me in a position of living up to your expectations. I have enough trouble with mine.
 - Please hear my feelings, not just my words, and accept all of them.
 - Do not save me. I can do that myself. Help me to better myself.
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MOVING FORWARD AFTER ABUSE

After an abusive relationship life can feel overwhelming, and it can be hard to figure out which direction to move. You might find yourself overwhelmed with feelings of loss and loneliness and the feelings of missing the abuser can be surprising. OR you might feel relieved and excited for the future. Most likely, it is a mix of both.

Either way, there are some things you will want to consider. First of all, you are 100% worthy of love and peace in your life. The abuse that you suffered is not your fault - that responsibility is on the abuser.

You now have the opportunity to heal and grow and create a new life for yourself and your children. This will take work, it can be painful, but it is worth the time and effort needed to go forward. Consider doing this work as a way of loving and valuing yourself.

One thing to remember is that feeling the feelings is essential. Allowing yourself the time to grieve all of the feelings such as anger, disappointment, and even sadness at the time and relationship lost, is the only way to freedom. The old adage is true: the only way out is through. And the best way to make it through is by seeking support.

Let's talk about healthy ways to move forward after abuse. You do not have to add all of these things to your life, nor is this an exhaustive list of things to do. Feel free to start small and pick what feels comfortable and safe. You get to choose your pace.

Supportive Community

An amazing place to find support is your local domestic violence agency. You will find counseling, support groups, housing and food resources, and much more. In Fremont or Custer counties, call **719-275-2429**. For help in your area visit thehotline.org.

Domestic violence agencies offer their resources free of charge and with a high level of confidentiality.

One of the biggest factors to moving forward is having people around you that love you and want the best for you. If you are surrounded by loving people, great. If your support system is weak right now, that is OK. You probably have more support in your life than you think. Keep in mind that your support system can and will grow, but it does take time and effort.

Look for support here:

- Family
- Friends
- Neighbors
- Advocate
- Counselor
- Coach
- Support Groups
- Your doctor
- Spiritual Community
- Community Groups
- 12-step programs or other recovery groups

It is OK to start with one or two people you can trust. Life has a way of growing and getting better as you are growing and healing. The important thing is that you have people that you feel safe around and with whom you can be open with about what is happening in your life right now.

Therapy, Counseling, and Support Groups

Reaching out to a counselor or therapist can feel scary if this is your first time. This support, however, can be life changing. Being able to speak your truth in a setting that is both understanding and validating is priceless.

Therapy and counseling provide a safe space to express and process emotions. When emotions are overwhelming and confusing, having the guidance and support of a counselor or therapist helps. It is common to carry feelings of shame and hopelessness after abuse. Your counselor or therapist can help you navigate these feelings.

You will also be able to learn about new tools for going forward in life such as dealing with heavy emotions, working through shame and regret, growing your self-esteem, boundary setting and more.

Support groups provide community at a time in life when you might be more isolated than you would like. You will feel less alone talking with others who have had similar experiences and who are moving forward with their lives. Groups provide hope for the future since some of the members will be farther along on their road of healing. When you are starting out, this can be highly motivating.

Groups are also the perfect place to start building your support system.

To find counselors and groups geared towards healing after abuse, visit our website: familycrisisonline.org

Positive Affirmations

Abusive relationships tend to bring up self-doubt, anxiety, depression, and hypervigilance (among other things). It takes time to reclaim your life.

Using affirmations each day helps to overcome some of the negative stuff swimming around in your mind. Abusive relationships usually include mental and emotional abuse which affects our thoughts. In fact, a large portion of our thought life comes from the things our parents, teachers, and partners have said to us in the past, and if those things are largely negative, it can create pervasive negativity in our thought life. Rehearsing these negative thoughts continues to do damage.

Writing down affirmations and leaving them in places you will notice them often will help you start this habit. Saying at least one of these affirmations to yourself 20+ times a day will bring about change after some time. You are worth the effort it takes to do this!

Try these affirmations or create your own:

- I know and trust my own mind.
- I am worthy of love, just as I am.
- I accept myself as I am.
- My home is becoming a haven of peace, safety, and love.
- I have firm boundaries and the strength to stick to them.
- I am capable of making decisions on my own.
- I am healing step by step, day by day.
- I am strong enough to feel my feelings.
- I am a whole and complete person on my own.
- It is an honor and privilege to know me, it is no one's right.

Self-Care

Self-care after an abusive relationship is an important way to engage in your healing. An abusive relationship is traumatic and emotionally taxing and your body and mind need time to rest. Giving yourself that time to rest is self-care.

You may be feeling a lack of energy at this point, and that is 100% normal. Often, in the early stages of

being on your own, simple tasks such as brushing your teeth and bringing the mail inside are overwhelming. Give grace and compassion to yourself, even if you think you should be doing "more".

If you have lots of energy and feel very positive about the relationship ending, you can take on more at the beginning. The whole point is to do what works for you and what feels good.

The best way to start with self-care is to start small. Don't create a giant list of things to do or you will end up burning yourself out. Keep in mind that self-care is "being mindful of your own needs and doing what it takes to care for yourself".

Asking yourself these questions will help you figure out what you need:

- What refreshes you? What makes you happy?
 - At home:
 - At work:
 - Experiences/activities
 - People:
- What makes life meaningful for you?
- What are you choosing that makes you happy or unhappy?

It might take some time to answer these questions, and that is OK! Ideally, self-care will be a life-long process for you, and you can add or change things over time.

Take a look at this list of self-care ideas. You might find some things that work for you, but feel free to add your own ideas. Self-care is all about YOU and what you need each day. A perfect way to start your day is to ask yourself "WHAT DO I WANT AND NEED TODAY?". Begin by picking one or two items and see how that feels. If you have more energy, do more. It is 100% up to you!

- Brush your teeth
 - Drink water
 - Movement, exercise, dance
 - Spend time with family and friends
 - Ask for help
 - Do something creative
 - Get enough sleep
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- Drink water
- Say NO
- Read a book
- Listen to music
- Clean one room in the house
- Organize a closet
- Take care of plants
- Go out and get ice cream
- _____
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It might feel "selfish" to make yourself a priority but be assured that it is not. Self-care is a way for you to love yourself, maybe for the first time, and it will help with your healing process, and you will find yourself liking "YOU"!

Healing after abuse takes time and effort, but it can be done. You are worth the effort it takes!

Reach out to us (Family Crisis Services @ 719-275-2429) if you need help. We are here for YOU!

YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS

- You have the right to be you.
- You have the right to put yourself first.
- You have the right to be safe.
- You have the right to love and to be loved.
- You have the right to be treated with respect.
- You have the right to be human - NOT PERFECT.
- You have the right to be angry and protest if you are treated unfairly or abusively by anyone.
- You have the right to your own privacy.
- You have the right to have your own opinions, to express them, and to be taken seriously.
- You have the right to earn and control your own money.
- You have the right to ask questions about anything that affects your life.
- You have the right to make decisions that affect you.
- You have the right to grow and change (and that includes changing your mind).
- You have the right to say NO.
- You have the right to make mistakes.
- You have the right NOT to be responsible for other adults' problems.
- You have the right not to be liked by everyone.

**YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CONTROL YOUR OWN LIFE AND TO
CHANGE IT IF YOU ARE NOT HAPPY WITH IT.**
