



What Do I Say if My Friend is in An Unhealthy or Abusive Relationship?

Listen: Tell them you want to hear about their relationship, the good and the bad

“You’ve been spending a lot of time with him/her. How are you two doing?”

“How does it make you feel when s/he acts that way?”

“What do you want to do about it?”

Stay present in their lives: Even if it frustrates you that they stay in the relationship, it is vital that you continue to support them

“It concerns me that this is happening to you, but I want you to know that I’m here for you if you ever need to talk more about it”

“If you want me to talk to your parents/a counselor/a teacher with you about this, don’t hesitate to come to me”

“You don’t deserve this, but I support you in whatever decision you make”

Affirm

“This tough situation doesn’t make you any less strong of a person”

“You are not alone or crazy. There are a lot of other people in the same situation”

“Leaving any relationship is difficult, and it can be even more difficult when the situation is unhealthy”

“This is not your fault. No one deserves to be treated this way”

Talk about red flags

“I went to a workshop/looked online, and what you just described is abusive/unhealthy”

“That kind of behavior concerns me and sounds like a red flag to me”

“I printed this out from a domestic violence website. Do any of these red flags remind you of your partner?”

Believe and validate them

“It sounds like you are going through some very scary things”

“I hear that you’re feeling scared and uncertain, and that is perfectly reasonable in a situation like this”

“You are right to feel the way you do about this”

“What s/he is doing to you is not okay”

Provide Resources

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800.621.HOPE (4673)

Catalyst Domestic Violence Services 24-Hour Hotline: 1.800.895.8476

Catalyst’s Chico Drop-in Office: 330 Wall St., Suite 50

Catalyst’s Confidential LGBTQ+ Program Line: 530.343.7789

www.loveisrespect.org

www.thatsnotcool.org

What if My Friend is Being Unhealthy or Abusive to Their Partner?

Explain that you are still their friend, but you don't like that they are abusive

"I am your friend, but the way you've been treating him/her concerns me"

"I'm not trying to attack you, but I need to talk to you about some things I've noticed"

"I hope it doesn't mess with our friendship, but I don't like the way you've been treating her/him"

"I'm coming from place of wanting to help you, not to judge you"

Use specific examples

"When you called him/her a name in front of me, it made me feel uncomfortable"

"If I were her/him, that behavior would really hurt my feelings and make me feel worthless"

"I didn't like the way you grabbed him/her when s/he tried to walk away from you"

Don't accept excuses

"I know that you aren't a bad person, but abusive behavior is never okay"

"It's not okay to call your partner names or use physical force against them"

"I understand that you may not see that this is wrong, but it is abusive/unhealthy"

"I looked online about some of the things you've been doing/saying, and those behaviors are abusive"

Encourage them to talk to a friend or counselor

"If you need me to help you talk to someone about this, I am here"

"I think it would be helpful for you to talk to the school counselor or your parents"

"There are people that can help you be a healthier partner"

Talk to a trusted adult yourself

"I have a friend who treats his/her partner abusively and I need to know what I can do"

"I need help talking to a friend about her/his behavior in her/his relationship"

Acknowledge and praise healthy and respectful behaviors

"It was really nice of you to compliment her/him today"

"The way you apologized for what you said was very respectful"

"I liked the way you let him/her walk away when they needed space"



See a word or phrase that you wouldn't say? Make it your own! Add and take away things so that it fits your comfort level and communication style!