

BUILDING A SUPPORT SYSTEM

PRODUCED BY **Break the Cycle**

WITH SUPPORT FROM


loveisrespect.org





When you're going through a tough time, it often feels like you don't have anyone to support you. You are not alone. There are many people who can help. If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, consider reaching out to people in your community. Sometimes it's good to be open and honest about things you go through, because holding it all in can be hard. You deserve to have someone supportive by your side, so never forget to talk about what you experience.

Trust is key when talking to individuals about unhealthy or abusive relationships. However, building trust can be difficult and takes time, so be patient with yourself. Your story is yours to share with who you want, when you want to. Abusers often isolate people from their community to control them. If you feel alone, here are some ideas of people in your community you can look to for support.

FRIENDS

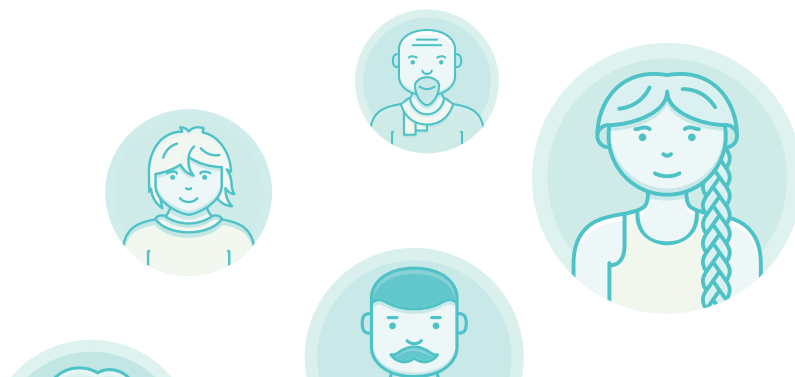
Try reaching out to your friends, but be mindful of what you share. Friends can provide a lot of support, but they can also spread information you'd rather keep private. Make sure to specifically point out any details you want to keep a secret, and share how breaking your trust may put you in danger.

TEACHERS

Do you have a favorite teacher? Try reaching out to them for support. It's your teachers job to keep you safe, so they can be a great resource when you're going through a hard time. It may feel awkward if you are not close with this person already. However, you could start by staying after school and discussing your homework or questions about class. Once you feel comfortable and believe they are a safe person, let them know you need to talk. Understand that your teacher may be required to tell someone about your situation depending on state or school policy. If you are concerned about reporting, look up "mandated reporting" in your state.

A FAITH LEADER OR MENTOR

A member in your faith community may be a good person to open up to, because they probably share your values and are willing to talk with you. Some faith leaders may be able to speak confidentially, but if you have any questions just ask them. If you don't know the person well, tell them about yourself first and see how they react. If they act judgmental or blame you, they may not be a safe choice. If you are seeking spiritual guidance, reach out to a faith leader or a mentor for support.





SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Consider talking to your school counselor -- they should be trained on dating abuse and know the related campus' policy and resources. They may also be able to help you talk to your parents, campus police, or your school principal. Like teachers, school counselors may be required to report any violence that happens to you to law enforcement and/or child protective services. (Visit <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/manda.pdf> for more information). Based on their reaction to your story or knowledge of resources, you get to decide if you feel comfortable talking to them about your relationship.

If you need academic accommodations or assistance maintaining a safety plan due to an abusive or unhealthy relationship, reach out to a social worker, counselor, or your district's Title IX coordinator. Upholding Title IX is a federal law, so not offering assistance or providing an environment free of sexual violence like dating violence, is against the law. Visit www.knowyourix.org for more information.

COACHES

If you have a coach you feel comfortable around, approach them after practice or during a free class period at school. Coaches often focus on both mental and physical well being, so your coach may be able to provide a unique perspective on your situation. Again, remember that they may be required to report any abuse to their superiors.

CAMPUS SAFETY OR POLICE

You can contact your local police department to ask specific questions about your rights as a victim and reporting options. Campus police should be aware of school policies about dating violence and should know which resources are available on campus. Local police should have similar information about the law and community dating violence services.

You have the option to report dating violence to police officers after an incidence occurs. You can file a restraining order/order of protection, or consider requesting an officer to periodically stop at your residence and check on your safety. If you ever feel unsafe or in immediate danger, be cautious and call your local law enforcement. Once you're safe, make sure they file a report of the incident.





GET SUPPORT OTHER PLACES

If you don't feel comfortable talking with members of your community, you can also consider looking for support at home or at work. It is okay to reach out for support from anyone you feel is safe.

CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES

You can use confidential text, chat, or phone lines to talk to someone to get things off your chest, talk through a situation, get emotional support, or make a safety plan. Sometimes it can be safer to talk to an anonymous person confidentially, because they may not have a connection with your abuser. Talking to family and community members can sometimes cause bigger issues if that person doesn't keep your information private. If reaching out to someone in your community jeopardizes your safety, but you have access to a phone or computer, reach out to Break the Cycle for help.

In addition, your community may have a local domestic/dating violence organization, and possibly an emergency shelter available. Try searching for "domestic violence centers" in your county or connect with your state's coalition against domestic violence or sexual assault to get connected to local resources.



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