

What does it mean to be a compassionate listener?

First and foremost, being a compassionate listener is understanding and accepting that it is not your role to provide someone with 'answers' or solutions, but to provide emotional support.

Instead, focus on meeting someone where they are and listening without judgment.

"When people like myself reach out for help, most of us recoil quickly and remain in abusive situations specifically because of feeling misunderstood."

-SafePlace client

When intervening in times of crisis, it is helpful to convey the following messages:

- You have the right to feel the way you do
- I respect you as a person
- I really want to hear your point of view and how this has been affecting you
- I am not judging you- neither agreeing nor disagreeing (remaining neutral)
- Your feelings belong to you
- I trust you to handle your feelings, to solve your own problems. I have faith that you know what is best for you

People are usually aching to talk to someone. Let them talk. Don't interrupt. You can make mental notes of things to go back to and ask for clarification if necessary.

"Oftentimes we are just waiting for someone to say, I see you."

-SafePlace client

"I feel invisible."

Isolating the survivor from friends, family and community is a common tactic used to keep someone caught in abuse. You can play an important role in supporting a survivor by staying connected to them, even if you don't agree with all the choices they are making.

"If you are isolated, you think you are alone, and all you have to look at is this person who is saying you are crazy."

Support and love brings people to a place where they can remember who they used to be.... because you forget."

-SafePlace client



'Unity Hands'

The women in SafePlace's support groups each contributed their own hands and artistic expression in the making of this art.

'Unity Hands' serves as a reminder of how community lifts people up.

"Why don't you just leave?"

It is important to recognize the most common reasons people stay in abusive situations.

Fear · Isolation · Children
Fear of losing custody of children
Lack of money · Becoming homeless
Love their partner
Their children love them both
Feel blamed by friends, relative, clergy, 'systems' therapist, co-workers, etc
Self blame · Abuser blames them
Partner is their pimp
Drug, alcohol, other addictions

Partner says "I'm sorry"
Their partner's caregiver(s) abused them
Partner says "I love you"
Partner says "I'll never do it again"
Partner says "I will take the children"
Partner says "I'll kill you if you leave"
Partner says "I'll kill myself if you leave"
The person has a disability
The person cannot read and/or write
The person cannot speak English
Immigration status
The shelters are full

They fear the welfare system abusing them more
Depressed · Afraid of the unknown
They or their partner are a public figure
Their partner is their personal caretaker
Their partner threatens to expose them as gay, bisexual, queer, lesbian and/or transgendered
They feel like there is no help
They have tried to leave before
Their partner found them before
They don't believe they are being abused

5 things you can say to a domestic violence survivor

- 1) You don't deserve to be physically, emotionally or verbally abused.
- 2) This is not your fault.
- 3) I'm afraid for your safety and the safety of your children/family.
- 4) I am here to believe and support you.
- 5) There are places to call for help.

5 things you can do to prevent sexual assault

- 1) Be a myth-buster. Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by a family member or acquaintance—not a stranger.
- 2) Question assigned gender roles and stereotypes.
- 3) Rape isn't funny. Challenge sexist jokes and comments when you hear them.
- 4) Think critically about the portrayal of violence in the media.
- 5) Believing is supporting. Believe someone when they say they have been assaulted.

If you need more information about preventing or addressing current or prior sexual assault, domestic violence, or how to support someone coping with these issues, SafePlace can help.

**Our services are free, confidential
and available 24-hours a day.
(360) 754-6300
TTY 711**

Need Help?

Call or email anytime day or night.

**24- hour helpline (360)754-6300
TTY 711**

**SafePlace
Community Service Center:
521 Legion Way SE
Olympia, WA 98501**

Business Office phone: (360)786-8754
Fax: (360)786-6377

Email: SafePlace@SafePlaceOlympia.org
www.safeplaceolympia.org

**WSECFD #0316-227
CFC #29429**

SafePlace is committed to non-discriminatory employment practices and to non-discriminatory delivery of services.

SafePlace 
freedom from violence

When someone is experiencing domestic violence... they already have someone in their life telling them what to do.



Be a compassionate listener.

It could change someone's life.