



Responding to Domestic Violence:

DO's and DON'TS:

The Goals Are:

1. SAFETY for the woman and children.
2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser.
3. RESTORATION of individuals and, IF POSSIBLE, relationships or mourning the loss of relationships.

With the ABUSER:

Don't go to him to confirm her story.

Don't give him information about his partner's whereabouts.

Don't pursue couple's counseling if you are aware that there is abuse in the relationship.

Don't be taken in by his minimization, denial, or lying about his violence.

Don't let him blame her for his behavior.

Don't be taken in by his "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a resource as he proceeds with accountability.

Don't approach him or let him know you know about his violence without the victim's permission, make sure she knows you plan to talk to him and that she is safe.

Don't send him home with only a prayer; work with others in the community to hold him accountable.

DO pray with him, ask God to help him stop his violence and to find a new way to communicate.

DO address any religious rationalizations he has for violence.

DO assess him for threats of suicide; these threats are a lethality risk. Be sure to warn a victim of such threats.

DO refer to a program which specifically addresses abusers.

DO name the violence as his problem, not hers. Tell him that only he can stop it; and you are willing to help.



With the VICTIM:

DO reassure her that this is not her fault and she doesn't deserve this treatment.

DO give her referral information.

DO support and respect her choices. Even if she is aware of the risks and chooses to return to the abuser, it is her choice. She has the most information about how to survive.

DO encourage her to think about a safety plan.

DO protect her confidentiality.

DO help her see that her partner's violence has broken the marriage and that the Lord does not want her to remain in a situation where her life and the lives of her children are in danger.-- If she decides to separate or divorce, DO support her and help her to mourn the loss of the relationship.

DO pray with her. Ask to give her the strength and courage she needs.

DO consult with colleagues in the wider community who may have expertise and be able to assist you in your response. Refer to www.faithtrustinstitute.org or www.theraveproject.com for resources.

DON'T minimize the danger to her. You can be a reality check. "From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety . . ."

DON'T tell her what to do; this can re-victimize her. Give information and support.

DON'T react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what she tells you. But don't react passively, either. Let her know that you are concerned and that what the abuser has done to her is wrong and she did not deserve it.

DON'T give information about her or her whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser.

DON'T add her name to a prayer chain for any reason.

DON'T blame her for his violence. If she is blaming herself, try to reframe: "It doesn't matter if you did have supper late or forgot to water the lawn that is no reason for him to be violent with you. This is his problem."

DON'T recommend couples' counseling or approach her husband and ask for "his side of the story." These actions will endanger her.

DON'T send her home with just a prayer and directive to submit to her husband.



Things You Can Say to a Survivor of Domestic Violence:

1. Are you OK?
2. Is anyone hurting you?
3. Is anyone helping you?
4. You don't deserve to be treated like that.
5. You deserve to feel safe in your home/neighborhood.
6. What do you want to do?
7. What would be helpful to you today?
8. Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me what's going on in your family.
9. It is not your fault.
10. There is nothing you did to "make" him/her hit you.
11. There's help available.
12. It takes a lot of courage to talk about this.
13. It must be a full time job to keep yourself and your children safe.

(Responding to Domestic Violence: Do's and Don'ts adapted from Dr. Nancy Murphy's book, *God's Reconciling Love: A Pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence*. Seattle, WA. FaithTrust Institute, 2003.)