

Relationship Abuse/Domestic Violence (DV) Tool for Continuum of Christian Care

This tool is designed to help pastors or lay leaders with little training, to help a person in an abusive relationship. The colors below correspond to the risk that is being experienced. The one being victimized has shown great courage in sharing with you. Your role is to listen and believe. Your non-judgmental listening ear is a great gift! You don't need to know all the answers, your caring presence speaks volumes. Assess the level of danger in the relationship on a scale of 1-10 (1-3 guarded, 4-6 elevated, 7-10 Extreme) to determine the recommended level of care 1-3 minimum, 4-6 moderate, 7-10 maximum). Consider also the information on the back of this page about what to DO and what NOT to do. Keep safety in mind!

	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9 10
Level of Danger	Guarded – General Risk	Elevated – Significant Risk	Extreme – Severe Risk
Symptoms	Occasional incidents of belittling, name calling, and truth twisting. May believe partner is caring but feels like “walking on eggshells”.	Frequent incidents involving yelling, screaming, hitting, stalking, making threats. There is isolation from friends and family and fear of partner.	Frequent incidents of being beaten physically and verbally, threats with a knife, gun or some other weapon, strangulation, or destroying property. Fear of death from partner.
Level of Care	Minimum	Moderate	Maximum
Goal of Care	Offer the one victimized education and counseling resources so that she or he can learn about DV and be proactive in thinking about safety	Safety is a priority. Education about DV and counseling resources are needed, as well as a safety plan so the one victimized is empowered, knowing how to get to safety.	Safety is the top priority. This is a dangerous situation. Offer resources to help the one victimized get to a safe place like a shelter. Help from police is recommended to gather belongings.
Resources	<p style="text-align: center;">Offer these websites for learning about DV:</p> <p>www.theraveproject.org (Religious and Violence E-learning)</p> <p>www.faithtrustinstitute.org</p> <p>www.restoredrelationships.org</p> <p>www.nnedv.org</p> <p>www.futureswithoutviolence.org</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refer to professional counselor trained in DV (Christian counselor preferred)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Local DV Shelter: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">State or Provincial Coalition: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National DV Hotline: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refer to previous websites</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Download safety plan from: www.theraveproject.org, Resources Would you like/download a safety plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refer to professional counselor trained in DV (Christian counselor preferred)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Call police or 911</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Local DV Shelter: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">State or Provincial Coalition: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">National Hotline: -----</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refer to professional Christian counselor trained in DV (Christian Counselor preferred)</p>

What to DO

1. DO remind the one experiencing abuse that safety is God's priority. Give Scripture references that support the truth of God's care and concern for safety. See Psalm 55, read the entire Psalm, note verses pertaining to God's care. Pray prayers for safety, see Psalm 142.
2. DO ask what is needed from you, for example: someone to listen and believe, connections to resources, a safety plan, support, etc. (Don't assume that you know what is needed or what is best, LISTEN!)
3. DO continually focus on safety first; that needs to stay at the top of the priority list.
4. DO help make connections to support services, even if they are not Christian. You can help in a walk-alongside role, providing the spiritual support as the person seeks help from agencies that offer other kinds of support; "build a bridge from the steeple to the shelter".
5. DO empower by offering choices and by affirming choices that have been made (even when you may not agree). Choice has been denied in the experience of abuse, now it must be restored.
6. DO maintain strict confidentiality; always get permission before sharing any information with anyone else.
7. DO offer guidance as you are able given your own knowledge; then refer to others when the needs are beyond your training or expertise.
8. DO be aware that computer and phone use may be dangerous. Ask about the best and safest way to stay in touch and be careful not to increase danger by making any contact without prior planning.
9. DO offer hope given through Jesus Christ (and grab on to some of that hope for yourself as well, all things are possible with Christ).
10. DO expect progress to take time; take care of your own needs and maintain your hope and faith. You may choose to refer to a responsible person who can be available to walk alongside and help navigate the difficult terrain on the long road toward healing.

What NOT to DO

1. Do NOT emphasize saving the relationship or marriage at all costs, or counsel to stay in an unsafe relationship. It is the abuse (not the leaving for safety) that has broken the marriage.
2. Do NOT attempt to force any action, even if it seems right to you. This will be disempowering and feel like more abuse.
3. Do NOT demonize the other party; understand that feelings between partners are often very strong and very conflicted.
4. Do NOT place blame on the one who has been abused, or blame his or her past choices. Relationships are very complicated and you don't know all the variables. What is known is that abuse is inexcusable; all the blame belongs to the one who chooses to abuse.
5. Do NOT share any confidential information with the one who is abusive; this could be extremely dangerous.
6. Do NOT conduct couple's counseling. Abuse is about one person seeking power and control (at times using criminal acts), not about two people desiring a relationship. Couple's counseling is ineffective at best and can increase the risk of danger.
7. Do NOT think that you can handle this on your own, or keep it "in house"; community resources including those with particular expertise in domestic violence should be used whenever possible.
8. Do NOT expect the one who has been abused to leave the relationship right away; it's often a long process which involves leaving and returning several times before a permanent situation of safety is attained.
9. Do NOT assume the crisis is over too soon; there is no "quick fix". Those who abuse often confuse regret (I got caught), remorse (I'm sorry) and repentance (I was wrong and know that I can never do that again). In our rush, we settle for less than what is needed for true change.
10. Do NOT lose hope or give up as you walk alongside the one who has been abused, or the one who seeks to end their abusive behavior. The journey toward healing is a long and winding road.

This tool has been gratefully adapted from a similar tool compiled by Catherine DeLoach Lewis, MA, LPC, BCPCC, owner of Christian Therapy Services, LLC, Charlotte, NC, 704-370-0334, www.christiantherapyservices.com.