

Starting The Conversation: Supporting Victims Of Domestic Violence

(NAPSA)—It's happening in your city, your community and maybe to someone you love. Domestic violence affects one in four women in their lifetime and although it's a prevalent issue, more than one-third of Americans have never discussed it with a friend or family member.

Many groups and organizations are working together to educate Americans and bring attention to the issue. The Allstate Foundation, a leading charitable organization focused on empowering women financially to end domestic violence, recently launched www.PurplePurse.com to enable women to start a discussion about the issue. Designed to look like an online fashion magazine, the website provides women a safe and informative place to educate themselves on how to end domestic violence.

"What many people don't realize is that abuse can be financial in nature, such as withholding banking information, controlling a partner's money or misusing her financial identity and ruining a person's credit. This occurs just as frequently as physical abuse," said Michele Mayes, Allstate executive vice president & general counsel. "We are rallying people behind the Purple Purse because it stands for economic empowerment and represents the center of a woman's financial domain. It's also meant to convey the message that it's okay to talk about it—in fact, please do."

For those who suspect a friend or family member is in an abusive relationship, talking about it with her can be a difficult but necessary first step. The most important thing you can do is to let her know that she has support and



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options to leave the relationship. The Allstate Foundation offers the following tips for starting the conversation:

1. Offer support without judgment or criticism. There are many reasons why a victim may stay in an abusive relationship, and many reasons why she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Let her know it's not her fault and that she's not alone. Respect her decisions, even when you don't agree. Do not criticize or guilt her—she needs you to be helpful, not hurtful.

2. Don't be afraid to tell her that you're concerned for her safety. Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse while acknowledging that she is in a very difficult and dangerous situation.

3. Avoid confrontations. There are many reasons why individuals experiencing abuse don't reach out to family and friends. It's important to recognize if she is

ready to talk about her experiences while offering support.

4. Ask how you can be helpful. Don't try to make decisions for your friend because it implies that you think she's incapable of making good choices for herself and it may deter her from confiding in you in the future. Instead, focus on offering support and encouragement.

5. Encourage her to get help. Suggest ways she can get additional support. Help her look into available resources, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline number (800-799-SAFE) or a local domestic violence agency with specially trained advocates to help her out of the situation.

If you or someone you know could benefit from additional information on domestic violence, visit www.PurplePurse.com for easy-to-use and important information about how to spot abuse, what to say to help a friend in need and where to turn for more guidance and resources.