

What can I do...

if I am experiencing abuse?

First of all, know that you aren't alone, and you are not to blame. Look after your physical needs. Get any necessary medical assistance.

Talk about what is happening to someone who will believe you (for example, a crisis line or a supportive friend).

Develop a safety plan. Know how to leave your home quickly. Memorize emergency phone numbers. Find out where you can stay if you are in an emergency (for example, a local crisis shelter).

Emergency phone numbers such as transition houses and sexual assault crisis lines are generally listed under "Emergency" near the front of the phone book. You can also look online at 211.ca for community services across Canada (and in many provinces you can phone "2-1-1" for non-emergency assistance as well).

What can I do...

if I have behaved abusively?

You aren't alone, and you aren't hopeless. It is possible for you to change if you seek specialized help. You are responsible for your behaviour and choices.

Your abusive behaviour will increase if you don't take steps to change. You may destroy your relationship or seriously hurt someone you care about. Your feelings of frustration and anger will also increase if you don't seek help.

You can get help by contacting a community agency offering treatment programs for abusers. Contact a local counselling agency, transition house, or sexual assault centre for more information.

What can I do...

if I know of abuse happening?

Tactfully offer your support to the person experiencing abuse and trust their story. Listen without being judgemental.

Assure the person experiencing abuse that the abuse is not their fault; they don't deserve to be hurt.

Support the person in making sure their physical needs are being met (for example, medical needs or safe housing). Reassure the person experiencing abuse that you will remain supportive without giving advice, empowering them to make their own choices.

Be aware of the location of the local transition house, shelter or sexual assault centre.

Don't approach the one who was abusive for their side of the story. Don't take any action unless you have received the permission of the person experiencing abuse.

If you are approached by the person who behaved abusively, do not accept their rationalizations. Don't take their words as evidence that the abuse has stopped. Urge them to seek help through treatment programs that address abusive behaviours.

If the victim is a child, report the incident to the local child protection agency, who will conduct the investigation. Do not contact the alleged perpetrator.

Being a supportive friend or caregiver can be emotionally draining. Find support for yourself.

What can I do...

if I'm in a position of trust or leadership?

Learn about abuse—the myths that surround it, its dynamics and effects. Realize that abuse is prevalent in all sectors of our society, including faith communities. Know that a person in a position of leadership has great potential for creating a helpful response to a situation of abuse.

Create awareness and build capacity to respond, in your organization, congregation, or community. Adopt protocols on how your group will respond effectively to abuse, bullying, harassment, or other forms of violence. Put policies of abuse prevention into place.

Refer any people affected by abuse to appropriate community resources specializing in abuse dynamics. Consider setting up a special fund to assist with counselling costs for those affected by abuse.

Promote healthy, respectful and inclusive relationships through example, education and communication.

Particularly in Christian faith communities, be alert to how sermons, songs, prayers and educational materials (especially about topics such as forgiveness, obedience and "bearing the cross") may affect those who are suffering abuse. Include and acknowledge the reality of abuse in prayers and teaching.

For more information, and specific resources for faith communities (including a more extensive guide for church leaders), please visit AbuseResponseAndPrevention.ca.



So, how do you know if it's abuse?

Below is a list of some traits that help identify relationship patterns that are abusive, harassing or bullying.

Abusive Actions & Attitudes:

- Put-downs, name-calling
- Threatening gestures
- Driving dangerously
- Throwing things
- Yelling, screaming, swearing
- Verbal threats
- Damaging property or pets
- "Silent treatment"
- Jealousy, preventing friendships
- Controlling activities and money
- Unwanted physical or sexual contact
- Pushing, spitting, grabbing, choking
- Public or private humiliation

Healthy Ways of Relating:

- Support and encouragement
- Freedom to have your own opinions
- Freedom to have friends
- Trust and mutuality
- Honesty
- Shared decision-making
- Physical and emotional safety
- Respectful consensual sex between intimate partners
- Kindness
- Respect for privacy
- Calm discussion
- Mutual care and nurturing
- Acceptance for who you are

First Steps to Addressing Abuse

The first step to dealing with abuse is to recognize it and name it for what it is. Abuse is one person or group of persons using coercive or manipulative actions to control others. Abuse is about misuse of power. The goal of abusive behaviour is to gain or exercise control over those perceived as weaker.

Abuse is more common when there are pre-existing power differences which can be exploited, such as in the following relationships: male/female, parent/child, teacher/student, pastor/parishioner, older relative/younger relative, caregiver/elderly person.

There are many forms of abuse, such as emotional, sexual or even spiritual. Most abuse is repeated, regular and occurs in a cycle or pattern. And abuse escalates. If a person who abuses doesn't acknowledge the abusiveness and actively seek help, the abuse will happen again and it will get worse. But with help, both the abused person and the abuser can move toward healing and wholeness in their relationships.

For more information, please visit AbuseResponseAndPrevention.ca.



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For MCC programs which address abuse dynamics, please contact one of the following MCC offices.

MCC British Columbia

End Abuse
mccbc.ca/abuse
(604) 850-6639 | (888) 622-6337 toll-free
direct line (604) 851-7725
endabuse@mccbc.ca
201-33933 Gladys Avenue
Abbotsford, BC V2S 2E8

MCC Manitoba

Abuse Response and Prevention Program
mccmb.ca/abuse
(204) 925-1917 | (866) 530-4450 toll-free
arp@mccmb.ca
159 Henderson Highway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2L 1L4

MCC Ontario

Sexual Misconduct & Abuse Resource Response Team (SMARRT)
mcco.ca/smarrt
(519) 745-8458 | (800) 313-6226 x254 toll-free
smarrt@mcco.ca
203-50 Kent Avenue
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3R1

To order more brochures, please call your nearest MCC office toll-free (888) 622-6337.

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