

Helpful and Harmful Things to Say to a Victim

The following list of helpful phrases may be used if you have ever found yourself uncertain what to say to a victim of domestic violence. You may use the list of harmful phrases below as a check to be sure you are not inadvertently saying things that may not support a victim. These lists may be especially useful to new legal advocates until they decide what phrases feel most comfortable for them, however, they are in no way intended to be inclusive.

Helpful Phrases:

- “You’re doing a great job dealing with the situation.”
- “What you are doing is very difficult and you’ve done so much already.”
 - List their actions
- “It sounds like you have really thought a lot about the situation and what you want to do.”
- “You really care a lot about your children. You are a wonderful parent.”
- “You are not to blame for being abused.”
- “You are not the cause of another’s violent behavior.”
- “You deserve to be treated with respect.”
- “You deserve to make your life safe and happy.”
- “You are not alone. You can ask/have asked others to help you.”
- “Things may be different now than before, and you and your children may have a different routine, but it may help you (and your children) live safely.”
- “I’m glad you are here with me now.”
- “I’m sorry it happened.”
- “It wasn’t your fault.”
- “It is ok for you to feel _____.”
- “You are not going crazy.”
- “Things may never be the same, but they can be better.”

Harmful Phrases:

- “I understand.”
- “You’re lucky that...”
- “You’ll get over it, it will just take time.”
- “I know how you feel.”
- “Everything will be alright, don’t worry.”
- “Try to be strong for your children.”
- “Calm down and try to relax.”
- “Why didn’t you _____?”
- “I think you should _____.”