

# YES, YOU CAN STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



It's unanimous: We all want violence against women to stop. In fact, nine out of 10 women said that ending domestic violence and sexual assault should be the top priority for a new women's movement (according to the Center for the Advancement of Women)—and also for every politician. There are ways you can make this happen—for one woman, and for all.

## SCARY STATS

- Three U.S. women are killed every day by a current or former partner.
- Domestic violence is a major cause of death among pregnant women.
- Nearly one third of American women report being abused by a partner at some point in their lives.
- Domestic abuse made up 20 percent of violent crime against women in 2001.

## Stop violence against a friend.

■ **START THE CONVERSATION.** It feels like there are many ways to justify not speaking up when you suspect someone is being abused: You never really know what happens in a relationship, you don't want to sound judgmental, or you're just minding your own business, to name a few. But really, what's worse: saying something and being wrong, or being right but keeping quiet? You know the answer. Before you ask a woman how she's doing, gather information about escape plans and shelters, says Bea Hanson, chief program officer for Safe Horizon, a victim-assistance agency. Then, try one of these conversation starters.

■ **WHAT YOU CAN SAY:** ■ "Are you and Tim doing okay? When I see you together, you seem a little tense." ■ "I've noticed that Joe's always commenting on what you're wearing. How do you feel about that?" ■ "Last night when Sam joked that you're his ball and chain, that didn't make me feel good. How did it make

you feel?" ■ "I'm not trying to be judgmental—I'm just concerned and want to make sure you're okay." ■ "I want to let you know that if you ever need support, I'm here for you."

■ **WHAT YOU SHOULD NEVER SAY:** ■ "I've always known that guy was a jerk." ■ "You have to get away from him. You should have left a long time ago." ■ "I told you so."

■ **IF SHE'S READY TO TALK,** give her the information you have. She may get angry or shrug you off—if that should happen, emphasize that you're there for her if she changes her mind. Need the perfect opportunity to broach the subject? **Do it on September 25, 2007.** Liz Claiborne Inc. and REDBOOK have teamed up again for **It's Time to Talk Day**, a day when women (and men!) are encouraged to destigmatize domestic abuse and increase awareness by talking about it on a personal level, a political level, or in any way that matters to them—just as long as we keep the conversation going. For information, go to [loveisnotabuse.com](http://loveisnotabuse.com). ►



## Stop violence against yourself.

■ **WHAT YOU NEED TO LEAVE:** If you're in a dangerous situation and need to flee with nothing but the clothes you're wearing, says Rose Pulliam, president of the National Domestic Violence Hotline, don't hesitate—do it. Advocates at local shelters will help you (and your kids) get what you need, from prescription refills to birth certificates. But if you *can* plan, Pulliam suggests calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE) or looking in the blue and white government pages at the front of your phone book for the number of a local shelter. An advocate there will help you decide what to bring. Most often you'll want your birth certificate, passport, Social Security card, bank or credit card statements, and prescriptions or medical supplies. Your advocate will also explain the intake process (it's different for every shelter), how long you can stay at the shelter, and what programs that particular facility offers (child care, legal advocacy, etc.).

■ **WHAT ABOUT MONEY?** Financial dependence is often a huge hurdle for anyone trying to leave an abusive relationship: Fifty-one percent of survivors have no access to a credit card and 27 percent have no access to cash, according to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). **If you're able to stockpile extra cash, try to anticipate your financial needs for a month and save for that goal,** says Pulliam. (Remember, a shelter will cover basic needs such as food, clothes, hygiene, and a place to sleep.)

■ **ANOTHER STEP IS TO START GETTING EDUCATED ABOUT MONEY.** Read finance articles in magazines (in the supermarket checkout if you have to), suggests Barbara Stanny, financial adviser and economic empowerment spokesperson for the Allstate Foundation Domestic Violence Program. "When you don't know about your money, when you have no money, you have no freedom," says Stanny.

■ **SURVIVORS CAN ALSO APPLY FOR GRANTS** from the Allstate Foundation. The Allstate Foundation has partnered with the NNEDV to provide grants to shelters and individual survivors, and has created a curriculum to teach survivors how to do everything from opening a checking account to repairing bad credit. This year, the Allstate Foundation will give out 10 \$50,000 grants to state coalitions, and in November, through the NNEDV, will begin awarding individual \$1,000 Education and Job Training Assistance grants directly to survivors.


## Stop violence against every woman.

■ **WHAT OUR GOVERNMENT IS DOING:** In 2005, the government reauthorized the 1994 Violence Against Women Act, which funds the investigation and prosecution of crimes against women such as domestic violence and sexual assault. The reauthorization includes increased funding for free legal assistance to victims, stronger federal laws against abusers, new protection and confidentiality laws for women in shelters, and a pledge to spend \$3.9 billion protecting women (up from \$1.6 billion).

■ **STATE GOVERNMENTS ARE ALSO STRENGTHENING LAWS** that protect women and offering services to victims of abuse and sexual assault. California and New York have stringent laws and protections, says Faye Wattleton, president of the Center for the Advancement of Women. In 1999, California made it illegal for employers to fire an employee for being a victim of domestic violence or for missing work to testify in criminal court—and other states (like Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, and North Carolina) have passed similar laws. California also pays unemployment to victims who must quit work when relocating to escape abuse. In New York, children can no longer be removed from their abused mother's care simply because she's a victim or because the child witnessed domestic violence.

■ **WHAT YOU CAN DO:** "The experiences of one woman are the experiences of every woman," says Wattleton. Take this "united we stand" attitude to heart. **"If enough women speak up, we can get the attention of politicians. All politics starts with your desire to make change," she adds.** To figure out how to best use your voice, get educated. These organizations provide information on how widespread abuse and sexual assault really are, what's already being done to protect women, and how you can effect change:

- Center for the Advancement of Women ([advancewomen.org](http://advancewomen.org))
- Family Violence Prevention Fund ([endabuse.org](http://endabuse.org))
- Love is Not Abuse ([loveisnotabuse.com](http://loveisnotabuse.com))
- Legal Momentum ([legalmomentum.org](http://legalmomentum.org))
- Safe Horizon ([safehorizon.org](http://safehorizon.org))
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline ([ndvh.org](http://ndvh.org))

Then find a local group that raises money for shelters or lobbies for stronger state laws protecting victims; contact your state branch of the NNEDV ([nnedv.org](http://nnedv.org)). You can also look up organizations at [idealist.org](http://idealist.org) (search for "Women's Issues" and type in your city and state to find a local group). To raise your voice on federal initiatives, sign up for "action alerts" from the NNEDV. You can sign petitions and learn more about what Congress is doing to protect women nationally. 

→ what issues matter most to you? email [whatweshare@redbookmag.com](mailto:whatweshare@redbookmag.com).