

# Domestic and Sexual Violence Helper's Guide

*Want to help, but don't know what to say or do?*

*This Helper's Guide will get you started!*

- Believe them!**
- Share your concerns
- Discuss options and resources
- Share Safe+Sound Somerset's 24/7 Call or Text Helpline
- Respect their decisions and feelings
- Call 911 if anyone is in immediate danger
- Take care of yourself



## Steps You Can Take

to support someone who tells you they are experiencing domestic or sexual violence, or to approach someone that you fear may be in a dangerous situation

### Believe them

False reports are extremely rare. Many survivors never disclose violence because they are scared, worry they won't be believed, or have already had others minimize or dismiss their experiences.

### Share your concerns

Telling someone why you care and are concerned can help. Keep it simple and honest without telling them what to do.

### Discuss options and resources

Many people don't know that they have choices and that free services exist and are available to them.

### Share Safe+Sound Somerset's 24/7 helpline

Our trained helpers can listen, validate, safety plan, and connect them to services.

### Respect their decisions and feelings

They may not want or feel safe enough to leave a relationship or get help. If they don't want to talk, respect their decision. This can build trust and empowerment.

### Call 911 if anyone is in immediate danger

### Take care of yourself

It can be hard to support someone. Call or text our helpline for support if you are struggling.



**24/7 Call or Text Helpline**  
**866-685-1122**

### Free, confidential services for adults, adolescents, and children

- Emergency Safe House
- Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Non-Fatal Strangulation and Smothering Response Teams
- Legal Advocacy & Case Management
- Financial Empowerment / Housing First
- Counseling

PO Box 835  
Somerville, NJ 08876  
Administration: (908) 359-0003  
[www.safe-sound.org](http://www.safe-sound.org)



@safesoundsomerset



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
**LGBTQIA+**  
**SEXUAL VIOLENCE**  
**PREVENTION**  
**NEW JERSEY**



## Your role in supporting a survivor of domestic or sexual violence *IS* to:

- Believe the person if they tell you that they have been hurt.
- Ask how you can help them feel safe. Offer to help write down what happened.
- Offer resources or information. Visit the Safe+Sound Somerset website at [www.safe-sound.org](http://www.safe-sound.org) and look at the information together.
- Suggest the Safe+Sound Somerset 24/7 call and text helpline for information, supportive listening, safety planning, and free services: **866.685.1122**.
- Follow up to remind them you care about their safety and happiness.
- Encourage the person to engage in calming activities like taking a walk or deep breathing.
- Taking care of yourself, too. You can also call or text our helpline for support or information.

### Helpful Phrases to Use with a Survivor

- I believe you.
- Thank you for telling me.
- How do you want support?
- There are people who can help. Can I give you this 24/7 call or text helpline number?
- Would you like me to look for resources?
- It's not your fault.
- You have a right to be safe and say, "No."
- Do you want me to sit with you while you call or text Safe+Sound Somerset's helpline?

## Your role in supporting a survivor of domestic or sexual violence *IS NOT* to:

- Fact find. You can provide care and resources without proof, details of the violence, or the whole story.
- Fix the problem. Focus on connecting them to professionals who provide domestic and sexual violence services.
- Assume you know what they are experiencing because of your own past.
- Tell them to leave their relationship. They may not want to or be able to leave.
- Contact the harm doer. This could put them or you in greater danger.

### Having a Supportive Conversation with a Survivor

**Avoid:** "Dump them! They're toxic!"

**Try This:** "I've noticed these behaviors, and I'm worried about you. Is everything OK?"

**Avoid:** "What did you do to make this happen?"

**Try This:** "There is no excuse for what happened to you. This was not your fault."

**Avoid:** "You have to..." or "You should..."

**Try This:** "What do you want to happen, and how I can I support you?"

**Avoid:** "Why don't you listen to me!?"

**Try This:** "I may not understand the whole situation or your decisions, but I respect your right to make them. I care about you and want you to be safe and happy."

**Avoid:** "Are you sure?" "They would never do that?" "Maybe you're overreacting?"

**Try This:** "I am sorry you are going through this right now. There are places that can provide information, safety planning, and free services. Would you like their number?"

