

Suggestions for Preventing Violence against Women

(WORK-IN-PROGRESS)



There is no correct or fail-safe way to prevent violence that works in every situation. People working in the area of violence prevention generally advise women to listen to their instincts. The more strategies we use to prevent or escape violence, the more likely we are to succeed.

Meant as suggestions only, this is a general list, hopefully with something of use to everyone. The list was put together from ideas gathered by volunteers.

OURSELVES

- If you are experiencing violence you are not alone. Tell someone you trust about what is happening to you. Please call your local women's organization for support and safety planning advice. Crisis and support lines can usually be found inside the front cover of your local phone book.
- Trust your gut; this is your intuition speaking. If you feel something is wrong, be proactive. Speak up, resist physically if necessary and/or leave the situation immediately.
- If you suspect someone is being abused, consider reporting it.
- If a child is involved, report it immediately. Reporting child abuse is required by law in Canada.
- Don't look the other way when someone is abusive. You could let the person who is being violated know you support them. Simply asking if they need help, even if they refuse it, will let them know they are not alone.
- If you feel comfortable and safe, you could consider talking to the abusive person about it. Please read this website for ideas on how to do so: <http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/talking-to-the-abusive-man/warning-signs-of-abuse.html>
- Consider drawing public attention to the abuse by consulting a friend, parent or your local women's organization for advice.
- In an emergency, if you see or hear evidence of violence, do not hesitate to call the police.

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Encourage the children in your life to respect others. Behave respectfully and non-violently with the children in your life. We can lead by example.
- Support a friend or family member who may be in an abusive relationship. First, find out if they are in abusive situation. If you suspect someone close to you is being verbally, emotionally or physically abused, offer your support but do not take over. Be sure to take direction from her, she knows best what she needs.
- Do not judge her or give up on her. Make sure she has access to resources.
- Talk to the children in your life about ways to protect themselves from violence. Give them clear instructions to tell if they are being hurt in anyway, including sexually. We can help prevent the cycle of violence from continuing by protecting our children.

- Prepare the children in your life in case a friend discloses abuse to them. If one child tells another child that someone is hurting them, and makes them promise not to tell, the child who has received this information is now carrying a secret. This can be too big a burden for a child to bear alone. Be clear that the best thing is to tell and help their friend get help.
- It is recommended by some experts that children who are experiencing violence keep telling adults whom they trust - parents, teachers, other family or friends - until an adult believes them and provides help.

COMMUNITY

- Participate in a violence prevention coalition. The crime rate can decrease significantly when violence prevention is a community-wide effort.
- Volunteer or donate to your local women's shelter or women's centre. These organizations save lives.
- If you can, give the women, teens and children in your life a ride or a walk home. Make sure they are safe before leaving them. Or, if you can afford it, offer cab fare to help get them home safely.
- Be alert to signs of animal abuse, this is often a symptom of interpersonal violence in the home.

SOCIETY

- Educate yourself. What is violence? What are the causes of violence? Talk to others about what you've learned. Your local women's organization is a good information resource.
- Lobby your public representatives to make issues that are important to women a priority.
- Women and girls: consider taking a women's self-defense or assertiveness class. These classes have assisted some women and girls to escape assaults.
- Men and boys: recognize that sexual violence will not end until men become part of the solution. Boys: consider learning assertiveness skills so you can stand up for what you believe in without violence. Consider learning how to defend yourself against predators.

If you are a victim of violence, you are not alone and you are not to blame. What was done to you is a crime.

Violence against women is “...any gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life...”

Excerpt from a United Nations definition of violence against women