

Protecting children during COVID-19

Tips for social workers and social welfare practitioners

#5 – Staying Safe when there is a Risk of Violence

Are you worried about the safety of a child or adult you have been supporting?

Survivors of domestic violence say that what matters most is having someone in their life who is there for them, without judgment, to bounce ideas off, get support, and lean on when things are tough.

As a social worker or social welfare practitioner, you can be that person for the children and adults you are responsible for, even in times of COVID-19 containment.

To help children or adults experiencing domestic violence, consider:

- If there is immediate danger, call the Hotline
 - WAO Hotline: 03 7956 3488
 - TINA WhatsApp: 018 988 8058
 - Talian Kasih: 15999 or WhatsApp 019 261 5999
 - Befrienders KL: 03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145
- If such response procedures exist - communicate the code word to ask for emergency assistance such as police coming immediately or Grab to bring them to a safe shelter
- Communicating with the survivor of domestic violence (Listen up, Link, Plan and Stay Connected)
- Communicating with the person at risk of abusing others

Next: Tips for communicating with survivors of domestic violence and persons at risk of abusing others



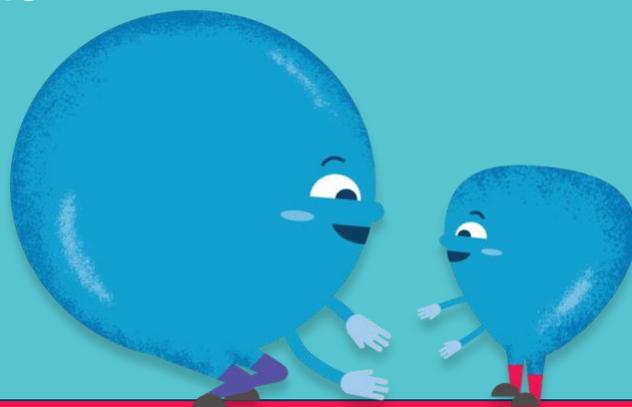
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Thank you for continuing to support children and families in need, even in these difficult times. You are heroes.



Communicating with the survivor of domestic violence

First **ask** the survivor **if they agree** to talk and **verify** that that **confidentiality, safety and security** conditions are in place.

- Asking the person experiencing abuse “How’s it going?” and really caring about the answer is powerful. Some other possible questions to ask include:
 - What is your biggest concern?
 - What are you most worried about?
 - What do you need or want?
 - How can I help?
 - How are the kids doing?
- If you are making a phone call at a critical time, always assume that the abuser could be listening in. The same goes for instant messaging services.
- First monitor if the survivor sounds uncomfortable or if there is any background sound. If this is the case, do not continue and ask the survivor to contact you when she/he is available through a missed-call, text message, or any other appropriate mean/s of communication that she/he feels comfortable with.
- If the survivor indicates she/he is able to talk, ask the following questions to confirm the safety and security conditions:
 - Are you comfortable talking right now? Do you agree to continue this talk now over the phone? Or do you prefer we schedule at a different time? Do you prefer a missed-call or text me when you are ready?
 - Is this the right number to call on? Do you prefer me to call any other alternative number/s?
 - Are you taking the call from a room that can ensure privacy and confidentiality of the conversation?
 - Do you think someone might walk in during our conversation? What do you advise as the best action to do if this happens? *For example, you can identify a readily thought out line to end the call if the survivor thinks she/he is being overheard, such as “I’m sorry there is no one called Jane here, you must have the wrong number.” Or arrange a codeword or phrase that the survivor can use if interrupted, such as “no, sorry I’m not interested in taking part in the survey”. Additionally, you could suggest a codeword/phrase that the survivor might use indicating that you need to alert local police or the Hotline (WAO Hotline: 03 7956 3488, TINA WhatsApp: 018 988 8058, Talian Kasih: 15999/ WhatsApp 019 261 5999 or Befrienders KL: 03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145)*
 - Ask again: Do you feel safe and have enough privacy for our conversation?
 - Are you fine talking now? (*Ask for consent repeatedly*)



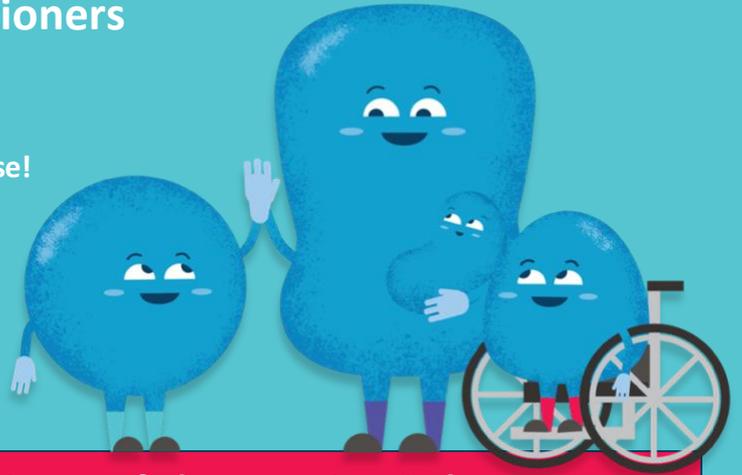
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Communicating with the survivor of domestic violence...

Listen Up

Really listen, listen more than you talk. Listen without having your own agenda. Being heard helps. Simply acknowledging another person's pain can help them more than just telling them to cheer up. Things you can say to people who have experienced harm include:

- I believe you.
- I am so sorry this happened.
- Thank you for sharing this.
- It's not your fault.
- You are not alone.
- You get to choose what to do next.

Link

Ask the adolescent/adult you are concerned about if there is a person they trust whom they can go to for support. Provide the number of the WAO Hotline (03 7956 3488), TINA WhatsApp (018 988 8058), Talian Kasih (15999 or WhatsApp 019 261 5999) or Befrienders KL (03 7956 8144 or 03 7956 8145) which they can call when they need urgent help, and, if such response procedures exist, provide the code word to ask for emergency assistance such as police coming immediately or a Grab to bring them to a safe shelter

Plan

Encourage the adolescent/adult you are concerned about to make a safety plan in case the situation deteriorates

(see TIP # 6. Safety Planning)

Stay connected

Staying connected is one of the most helpful things you can do. When someone is isolated, the abuser has far more power and control over their lives. Consistently make contact by the phone and, if possible, go to the home and meet the child/adolescent/adult you are concerned about on their porch while maintaining social distancing. If there is a risk to life or serious harm always call for emergency assistance.



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Communicating with the person at risk of abusing others

Acknowledge the abuse

Taking the time to acknowledge that what you're seeing in someone's relationship is not ok or is abusive can be an incredibly powerful action. Simply saying: "Hey that's not cool" can be the first step in helping them care better for each other.

Stop the stress and/or anger when it starts:

- The same things usually make us get stressed and angry every time.
- What causes the anger? When does it happen? How do you normally react?
- Prevent it from starting. If it happens when you are tired, get some sleep or rest. If it's hunger, try to eat. If it's feeling alone, ask someone for support.
- Look after yourself. Try taking a 10 second pause, breath in and out slowly five times, then try to respond in a calmer way. Also give yourself a break from time to time. When your children are asleep, do something fun or relaxing for yourself. Make a list of healthy activities that YOU like to do. You deserve it!

Take care of yourself and reduce risks

- We all need to connect. Talk to friends or family every day.
- If you know that the amount you are drinking is unhealthy to you or leads to bad decisions, cut back on the drinking or don't drink at all.
- Do you have weapons or things that can be used to injure others? Lock them up, hide them or take them out of the home.
- Call a truce when you can see arguments building up, and go into another room or outside if you can.
- When you start feeling angry, take a 20-second cool down. Breathe in and out slowly 5 times before you speak or move. Go somewhere else for ten minutes to regain control of your emotions. If you have safe outdoor space, go outside.
- If the trigger for getting angry is a baby that won't stop crying, it's OK to leave them safely on their back and walk away for a bit. Call someone you trust and talk to them to help calm you down. Check on the baby every 5-10 minutes.

