

# What To Expect When You Contact Us

Adapted from the National DV Hotline

Every contact to our Hotline is unique. Some callers identify as survivors of abuse, some are unsure if they are being abused, and some are concerned family members and friends seeking help for someone else. While every contact is specific to the individual, here are some phrases and questions that advocates use consistently to best help each caller.

## **“How can I help?”**

We are here to help, support, and listen to you. We will start where you are in your process.

## **“Thanks for reaching out.”**

You might feel anxious about contacting our Hotline, especially if you haven't reached out for help before. We are completely confidential and anonymous and our advocates have extensive training in issues related to domestic violence. Reaching out for help is the first step toward improving your situation, whatever that may be, and we are glad to be of service when someone takes this important step.

## **“Are you in a safe place to talk?”**

It's critical for your safety that you reach out when your partner is not around, whenever that is possible. If your partner does come home or walk in while you're talking with an advocate, immediately disconnect the call – we understand. Because abusive relationships are based on power and control, an abusive partner is likely to react in anger as you take steps to regain control. Another way to stay safe is to remember to delete our number from your phone and clear your internet browser history after visiting our website.

## **“Tell me a little bit about your situation.”**

Before an advocate can begin helping you, they need to know your specific situation. This gives you an opportunity to bring up any concerns you've had about your relationship. Sometimes, giving a relationship timeline or explaining a recent altercation with your partner can give the advocate a better idea about what you've experienced. We will ask specific questions regarding your personal situation in way of a lethality assessment.

## **“What have you considered doing at this point?”**

You are the expert of your own situation. Callers reach out at all different times in their relationships, so advocates need to know what steps you're ready to take before they can help you find resources. While an advocate won't give explicit advice on what you should do next, you can talk out some options to make the best decision for yourself.

**“How are you taking care of yourself?”**

Self-care is important at any stage of a relationship. If you are in an abusive relationship, it is easy to forget about caring for yourself. Taking care of yourself may be as simple as eating a good breakfast to prepare for the day or getting enough sleep at night. Advocates often suggest writing in a journal (when it is safe to do so), reading a good book or taking a bubble bath to ease your mind.

**“Let’s safety plan together.”**

We will create an individual safety plan unique to your situation. We can safety plan around leaving your relationship, remaining in your relationship, if children are involved, if pets are involved, or if you are experiencing emotional abuse.

**“Is there anything else I can help you with tonight?”**

Maybe over the course of your conversation with an advocate, you thought of another question or feel more comfortable asking something you were scared to ask before. Advocates are always available to answer your questions about healthy relationships and how to handle an unhealthy or abusive relationship, so don’t hesitate to ask.

*\*Hotline calls will be answered by staff at the Family Abuse Shelter of Miami County weekdays between 8pm and 8am and weekends.*