

How Can You Help a Woman in an Abusive Relationship?

The women who participated in interviews for this study noted many different interventions that helped them to end the abusive relationship. The interventions fall into several categories:

Interventions which assisted the woman to recognize that what she was experiencing was abuse

"I had two or three therapy sessions with [a counselor]...then I started to write it all out...I showed her what I had written and she said, 'this is abuse' and the minute she said it everything fell into place. I thought, she's absolutely right and that was a turning point for me. So from then on, I no longer blamed myself."

Interventions which helped the woman to understand that the abuse was not her fault and that she didn't deserve to be abused

"When my kids got older they saw all these things that I was going through and they said, 'You shouldn't put up with those things. You shouldn't have to!'"

Interventions which allowed the women "breathing space" and time to reflect in a peaceful environment

"That night I prayed, 'God help me. I need to stay here [at Anderson House] longer. I love the peace. I love the quiet.' [When my husband picked me up the next day], we didn't even get to the store before he found something to yell at me about. It was on the way home, and it was like, 'I remember, I remember, I don't want to be here.' And from that time on, I realized that I have to make a plan to escape and that I have to make it when I leave."

Simple invitations to talk about the abuse with someone who was not going to judge her

"I noticed when I was sitting in the examining room...there was a flyer-type sign, 'If you are being abused, talk to me.' And I thought that it was there if I ever needed it. And I did – a couple of months later I needed to talk to [the doctor] and he was understanding...he was supportive. He said, 'You know [abuser] is never going to change and maybe you're going to have to move'."

~ continued

"The first time I left I didn't know what was available out there. Through that family violence prevention workshop I learned about Anderson House and that you didn't have to have broken bones to qualify...I think a lot of people don't know this, we're ignorant of it...That workshop was the beginning of the rest of my life really...that was an eye opener for me."

Woman Abuse
and the
PEI Justice System
Research Team
of the
Muriel McQueen
Fergusson Centre
for
Family Violence
Research

www.isn.net/~tha/womanabuseresearch/

The quotes in this document are from PEI women interviewed in 1999 during herStory of woman abuse and the PEI justice system, a project of the Woman Abuse and the PEI Justice System Research Team of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research.

A combination of interventions over time

"The morning I left I went to my doctor, first of all and he called EPWIC and she called Anderson House. It was just sort of a circle. I had always said, 'If I ever leave, I'd never come back.' The morning I left I knew I wasn't coming back...it was all the years of all the things that I couldn't put out of my mind. All the things that had happened between us - all the abuse. I didn't want to go through it anymore."

"I got a lot of help. I couldn't have done it myself. If those resources were not there I couldn't have done it. I would ... probably still be with [my partner]...slaving away and waiting on him hand and foot...and I would have survived somehow, but I wouldn't have been happy."

How Can you Help a Woman in an Abusive Relationship?

- *Talk in a quiet place.*
- *Assure her you will not repeat the conversation.*
- *Listen and let her talk about her feelings.*
- *Believe her.*
- *Tell her, "it's not your fault and you don't deserve to be abused".*
- *Avoid judging her.*
- *Offer alternatives, not advice.*
- *Be patient; she will take action to leave an abusive situation when she is ready.*
- *Let her know she's not alone.*
- *Tell her about confidential information and support available through Anderson House or Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre.*
- *If she tells you about a child who is being abused or who she suspects is being abused, tell her that reporting child abuse or suspected child abuse to child protection authorities or the police is required by law.*

Anderson House	892-0960 or 1-800-240-9894
Rape and Sexual Assault Crisis Centre	1-800-289-5656
Child and Family Services	Charlottetown 368-5330 Summerside 888-8100
	Montague 838-0700 Souris 687-7060
	O'Leary 859-8811