

Some People Are Stuck at Home with Abusers. What Can They Do?

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Even those in emotionally healthy homes are feeling the strain of so much togetherness at this time of uncertainty and social distancing. But for some, this is their worst nightmare. Distance is the primary strategy for many victims of [domestic violence](#).

Now that a large portion of Americans have been asked to stay home to fight the spread of the novel coronavirus, many victims are finding themselves trapped with their emotional, sexual, or physical abuser. While there are no easy answers to this very complicated situation, I have listed some tips to try to address the issue. If you are concerned but not sure if abuse is happening in your home, [learn more about abuse here](#).

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE STUCK AT HOME WITH AN ABUSIVE PARTNER OR FAMILY MEMBER

1. Seek shelter with someone else.

If possible and safe, find an excuse to stay with another close family member or friend. Maybe they need help with working from home or with their children. Maybe your kids need a play date with another child. Maybe you need to take food to someone who can't cook for themselves. Find a reason to get out, at least for a while.

2. Stay prepared.

Hide an extra car key, jacket, credit card, and walking shoes. Keep your phone charged. If things escalate, you need a way to leave. Planning ahead is essential because when you are under pressure with adrenaline pumping through your brain, you may not be able to think as clearly.

3. Avoid escalating things with the abuser.

Many arguments escalate faster (and may become violent more quickly) when a victim tries to explain themselves. Let the abuser believe false things about you, i.e., "You always...", "You never...", "You think that...", "You didn't keep your word about...", "I always give you..." "I do everything for you, you don't...", etc. Let them see you incorrectly, at least for the time you are stuck at home.

Editor's note: *If your abuser has ever been violent, or you think they may become violent, this is not a*

suggestion to allow or put up with harm. If you are in danger, leave the situation and/or seek help from someone you trust as soon as you judge it safe to do so.

4. Don't seek resolution.

Remember this won't be the last fight. Often abusers rope victims in to arguments threatening that "This is the last fight, or...". You will most likely have this argument again. If they threaten to leave or divorce, remember they will probably say it again in the future. **This won't be the last argument.** Allow the tension to not be resolved. Don't chase them to "understanding" you or your perspective.

5. Reach out to people you can trust.

Tell people who care about you. This is the time to reach out to those who love you. If you don't have trusted friends and family, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233**. Many therapists are also offering phone or Skype sessions during this crisis. Some counselors are even offering discounted therapy sessions during the pandemic. [Search for a trustworthy therapist here.](#)

6. Practice self-care.

Take care of your emotions. Exercise, listen to music, play video games, go for walks, garden, do creative projects, or [join online groups](#). Your feelings are legitimate. You are not overreacting.

7. Avoid being trapped.

Try not to be stuck in a car with the abuser. Try to avoid confined places where you can't leave.

8. Don't let your abuser pull you back in to arguing.

When you stop responding in an argument, don't get pulled back in by, "See, you don't care, you're just walking away," "There you go giving up on us," "Come back here, I'm not done talking to you," or "See, you're not interested in resolving this!" Walk away anyway. Don't explain why.

9. Remember the abuse is not your fault.

Remember an abuser isn't abusive because they don't understand you or the facts, they are abusive because of who they are. And no matter what you do or don't do, say or don't say, you can't change them.

10. Get help if you feel threatened.

Go to a neighbor's home or call 911 or trusted local law enforcement if you feel threatened. There are many domestic violence safe houses that can pick you up and keep you safe from your abuser and help you with legal issues like restraining orders.

YOU DESERVE COMPASSION, SO GIVE SOME TO YOURSELF

Remember to be kind to yourself. You did not cause anyone to treat you in an abusive way. You deserve respect and safety no matter how you have reacted in the past.

Don't hold anything over your own head. You are not to blame for someone else's behavior.

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