

A Practical Guide for GBV Victim & Survivor Support & Self-Care



END GBVF



MOVEMENT



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**Ford
Foundation**

Empowering you to help others and yourself in times of need.



TYPES OF ABUSE/THREAT!

Types of abuse or threats that make up gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in public and private life.

- 1 Acts of physical violence**, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating.
- 2 Sexual violence**, including forced sexual intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion.
- 3 Verbal abuse** involves using words to belittle, demean, intimidate, or threaten someone, creating a hostile and harmful environment.
- 4 Emotional (psychological) abuse**, such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, and threats to take away children.
- 5 Controlling behaviours**, including isolating a person from family and friends, monitoring their movements, and restricting access to financial resources, employment, education or medical care.
- 6 Coercion** using force, threats, manipulation, or psychological pressure to compel someone to engage in behaviours or actions against their will.
- 7 Economic or educational deprivation** - deliberate restriction or denial of financial resources, employment opportunities, or access to education, often used as a means to control, disempower, or keep someone dependent on their abusers.

RECOGNISE THE SIGNS OF GBV:



Physical injuries: Bruises, cuts, broken bones, or frequent "accidents."



Behavioural changes: Withdrawal, anxiety, depression, or sudden changes in behaviour.



Emotional indicators: Low self-esteem, fearfulness, or sudden emotional outbursts.

You are not alone.

Whether you are a victim,
witness or a programme
supporter, help is available.
Together, we can end GBV
in South Africa.



HOW TO SUPPORT A VICTIM & SURVIVOR

LISTEN

Make them feel heard and seen



Refer to immediate and long-term
SUPPORT & CARE

Look after
YOURSELF



STEP 1

LISTEN

Make them feel heard and seen

Ensure safety first

Always ensure the victim's/survivor's safety and your own. If the situation is dangerous, contact emergency services.

- **Speak in a private, safe place** where the victim feels safe. Use phrases like "I am here for you." "You are not alone." "Help is available." "You are supported."
- **Offer physical comfort** (if appropriate): A blanket or tea can provide comfort. However, always respect their boundaries and ask before initiating physical contact.

Listen actively

Allow the victim/survivor to share their story at their own pace and in a way that makes them feel safe. Remember that this is a very vulnerable experience for them.

- **Align your body posture** to make the survivor or victim feel heard and seen.
- **Silence can be powerful** and sometimes necessary as they process their thoughts.
- **Be supportive and non-judgmental:** Listen without judgment or blame. Use phrases like "I believe you" and "This is not your fault." "It's okay to feel this way." Avoid saying: "Why didn't you leave?", "Are you sure this happened?", "It's not that bad."
- **Validate their experience** by reinforcing that what happened to them is serious and deserves attention. Say things like, "What happened to you is serious, and your feelings are important."
- **Avoid comparing** their situation to others or your own experiences, as this can make them feel misunderstood or dismissed.

Offer practical help

- **Offer to accompany them to appointments,** help with childcare if you are in a position to do so, or assist in finding legal advice or shelter.
- **Help them make a safety plan:** If they are in immediate danger or fear future harm, assist them in creating a safety plan, including finding a safe place to go, important contacts, and steps to take in an emergency.



Refer to immediate and long-term **SUPPORT & CARE**

STEP 2

Encourage them to seek help

- **Provide information:** Offer resources like local shelters, hotlines, legal aid and where to apply online for protection orders. (*See front of pamphlet*)
- **Health services:** If they experience physical violence, they will likely seek health services, and these providers are favourably positioned to refer them to other services.
- **Professional support:** Gently suggest speaking with a counsellor, therapist, or social worker specialising in trauma and GBV. There are also local support centres and groups.

Other things to remember

- **Keep their information confidential:** Protect the victim's/survivor's privacy by not sharing their story without explicit consent.
- **Don't gossip or share their story:** Even with good intentions, discussing the victim's/survivor's experience with others can lead to gossip and further harm. Respect their story and keep it to yourself.
- **Encourage them to document everything:** Suggest that they keep a record of incidents in a safe place, including dates, times, and any evidence, such as photos or messages, in case they decide to take legal action later.
- **Respect their choices:** Let the victim/survivor decide what steps to take next. Support their decisions even if they choose not to report the abuse.
- **Do follow-up:** If appropriate, check in with the victim/survivor after your initial conversation to see how they're doing and if they need further assistance.
- **Don't promise things you can't deliver:** If you're unsure about a resource or solution, don't give false hope. It's better to say, "I'll find out and get back to you."

Look after **YOURSELF**



STEP 3

Being a first responder, witness or supporting someone through trauma can be emotionally taxing.

Remember to seek emotional support and practise self-care in a way that works for you.

Secondary trauma occurs when you experience stress and emotional pain from recounting your own traumatic experience, helping or hearing about someone else's trauma. Signs to watch out for are emotional exhaustion, difficulty sleeping, anxiety or depression and feeling overwhelmed or helpless.

Practical self-care tips

- **Debrief:** Find a moment to debrief and reset your emotions.
- **Set boundaries:** Taking breaks and saying no when necessary is okay.
- **Seek professional support:** Consider talking to a trauma counsellor or joining a support group for people who help GBV survivors.
- **Practice mindfulness:** Engage in activities like deep breathing or meditation to help manage stress.
- **Stay connected:** Talk to trusted friends or family members about your feelings. Don't isolate yourself. Always keep the victim's story confidential if that's their wish.

Long-term self-care strategies

- **Develop a routine:** Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep are crucial.
- **Engage in hobbies:** Spend time doing activities that bring you joy and relaxation.
- **Continue education:** Learning more about trauma and self-care can empower you to handle stress better.

Educate yourself

The more you understand about gender-based violence, the better you can support victims/survivors effectively and cope with secondary trauma.

HOTLINES:

**Gender-Based Violence National Hotline
(Command Centre):** 080 042 8428

Send a Please Call Me to *120*7867#

Free from any cell phone and a social worker will call

Available 24/7. SMS help to 31531 for PWD

Stop Gender Violence: 0800 150 150

Childline: 08000 55555

Lifeline Counselling: 0861 322 322

Human Trafficking: 0800 222 777

Shelter Helpline: 0800 001 005

SAPS National Emergency Line: 10111

Legal Aid: Toll-free Advice Line - 0800 110 110

Weekdays 7 am - 5 pm or

Send a Please Call Me to 079 835 7179

Domestic Violence Protection Order:

Online application

<https://www.justice.gov.za/services/dv-protection-order.html>

**Special thanks to all who work tirelessly to support
victims of GBV and advocate for their rights.**

