



P.O. BOX 472, WAKE FOREST, NC 27588 | PH: (919) 374-0778 | EMAIL: INFO@CALLEDTOPEACE.ORG  
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## COUNSELING DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PASTORS AND PEOPLE HELPERS

DO'S	DON'T'S
<p><b>Listen to her story and believe her*.</b> Keep an open mind and give her an opportunity to share. If she is brave enough to come forward, there is likely something terribly wrong at home. Statistics indicate that false reports are very rare. <b>Ask wise questions and be an attentive as the story unfolds.</b></p>	<p><b>Don't minimize or doubt her experience because you know her spouse</b> and he doesn't present that way in public. Most abusers are completely different in home than in public. They are likely to twist facts to place the blame on their wives. <b>Don't ask her what she did to provoke his anger. Just listen.</b></p>
<p><b>Listen for themes of fear, control, misuse of power and patterns of oppression.</b> Domestic abuse is characterized by a pattern of abusive behaviors that are intended to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner.</p>	<p><b>Don't put blame for the abuse on the victim.</b> The abusive behavior must be challenged not the one coming to tell her story. However, <b>do not confront him until she is ready and gives you permission. This could endanger her more!</b></p>
<p><b>Be aware that many victims may not see themselves as abused.</b> They discount physical intimidation, harassment, threats, insults, damage to personal property, screaming, false imprisonment, isolation, stalking behaviors, and control as forms of abuse. NC defines domestic violence as <b>"continued harassment that rises to the level to inflict substantial emotional distress."</b></p>	<p><b>Don't tell her that she is not suffering from domestic violence because she is not being physically abused.</b> That is only <i>one</i> form of domestic violence but there are many others. Realize that you have only heard part of the story. Most victims do not share the whole story up front but give little bits of information to see how you will respond. They also tend to make excuses for their abusers.</p>
<p><b>Pray with her and encourage her to pray. Help find hope in God.</b> Let her know that He is with her and that He hates abuse. Most victims of abuse begin to believe that He is not on their side. Help counter misconceptions about Him that she may have.</p>	<p><b>Don't tell her to pray harder or give her prayer as her only option. Don't underestimate the danger even if the abuse has not been physical.</b> Don't just make simplistic comments like, "Trust God and He will take care of you" – instead help her stay safe.</p>
<p><b>Refer her to an advocate and counselor/therapist well-trained in domestic violence, and a support agency like CTP and local DV agencies</b> that can provide her with more information and resources.</p>	<p><b>Don't refer her to marriage counseling. Don't counsel the victim and abuser together.</b> Domestic abuse is not a marital problem. Treat it as you would any other individual issue such as drug abuse.</p>

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<p><b>Refer her to a trusted attorney</b> who can help her decide whether she needs to file for a Domestic Violence Protective Order or take other action to protect herself and her children. While taking legal action is never the preferred course of action sometimes when there is serious risk involved, it is necessary. An attorney can help her determine the best course of action.</p>	<p><b>Do not give her legal advice.</b> The law in NC has specific statutes and laws regarding domestic violence. This includes advising against legal separation or discouraging her from keeping records to support her case in court. <i>Giving her the incorrect advice could leave her and children destitute or exposed to significant physical harm, including death.</i></p>
<p><b>Provide accountability for him and safety for her.</b> Make sure any plan to help honors her input before his. Involve trained advocates to assess danger levels.</p>	<p><b>Do not give him a checklist of tasks</b> that set him up to believe completing them will automatically lead to reconciliation. Beware of false repentance!</p>
<p><b>Do encourage her with the Word of God and support groups.</b> Make affirming statements, such as “God does not condone abuse,” “You are not responsible for his behavior,” “Abuse is wrong. It is not your fault.” <b>Encourage her to protect herself and her children.</b> Always put the wellbeing of the victim and children over the marriage.</p>	<p><b>Do not tell the victim what to do or try to fix it.</b> Many women who have been abused have been conditioned to be dependent on their abusers, so when they get out, it’s often difficult for them to transition into independence. Help them explore their options, encourage them to learn to make their own decisions, and problem solve for themselves.</p>
<p><b>Remind her that husbands are supposed to love their wives as Christ loved the church.</b> Christ laid down His life for His Bride and did not insist on his rights. Is her husband loving her in a sacrificial way, or is he lording it over her?</p>	<p><b>Do not tell her to submit to him and everything will be better.</b> Understand that submission is a voluntary yielding not obedience. When victims submit to selfish control it promotes sin and usually makes things worse.</p>
<p><b>Show faith in her.</b> “I believe in you.” “I trust you to figure this out.” “I trust that as you connect to God, He will see you through this tough time.”  <b>Respect her privacy.</b> Remember to keep all communication confidential unless she gives you permission to share.</p>	<p><b>Do not shame or judge her.</b> Even if she makes a poor decision as she is learning to think for herself again, be careful not to seem shocked or judgmental. It could cause her to lose trust in you, and stop being honest with you. <b>Please don’t try to pressure her to share more than she is ready to share.</b></p>
<p><b>Create a network of advocates, counselors, support groups, attorneys and other helpers who are specifically trained in domestic violence to assist you in making a plan to help.</b></p>	<p><b>Don’t try to do this on your own!</b> Refer out to the appropriate resources. Even though you may mean well in providing continual counseling, without proper knowledge, you may do more harm than good.</p>

\*We recognize that women can also be abusive as well; however, in our ministry over 95% of victims we see are female, so for simplicity’s sake we will use male pronouns when referring to abusers and female pronouns for victims.

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