

Supporting Patients Experiencing Domestic Violence

Take the opportunity to briefly educate the patient

'Everyone deserves to be in a healthy relationship where they are treated as an equal and their freedom and independence is respected.'

Set up the question

'We see a lot of people experiencing abuse, so we've begun to ask about it routinely.'

Let the person know what you will do with the information

'We ask this question so we can connect you with someone to talk to.'

'I want to let you know that I won't share anything we talk about today outside of the care team unless you were to tell me about [insert hospital's mandatory reporting requirements].'

Ask the screening question

'How are things between you and your partner?'

'Are you currently or have you ever been in a relationship where you were physically hurt, choked, threatened, controlled or made to feel afraid?'

(This question both addresses physical and emotional abuse and uses the key word 'control')

Respond to a positive disclosure

'I'm so glad you told me, we see a lot of people in similar situations, this is not your fault. Can I connect you with someone to talk to?'

Make connection to provider

Behavioral Health

Domestic Violence Organization

Supporting Patients Experiencing Domestic Violence

What to Say to a Patient that Discloses Domestic Violence

- *'Thank you for sharing this, I'm glad you told me.'*
 - Show you are comfortable receiving this information and that you believe them
- *'I'm so sorry for what you are going through.'*
 - Show empathy
- *'No one deserves to be abused, controlled or made to feel afraid.'*
 - Remind them it is not their fault
- *'We see many people in your situation.'*
 - Normalize the disclosure
- *'Can I give you some information to DOVE?'*
 - Provide resources and connections

What **NOT** to Say to a Patient that Discloses Domestic Violence

- *'You should leave.'*
 - Leaving can be one of the most dangerous times for a survivor.
- *'You should get a restraining order.'*
 - In some situations, this can increase risk.
- *'Have you tried couples counseling?'*
 - Couples counseling is not effective for controlling relationships.
- *'It sounds like your partner is under a lot of stress/has a substance abuse problem/has a mental health diagnosis/anger management issue.'*
 - The partner may also have these issues but none of these cause the abuse.

Disclosure is not the goal. The goal is to create a culture of support, connection & information.