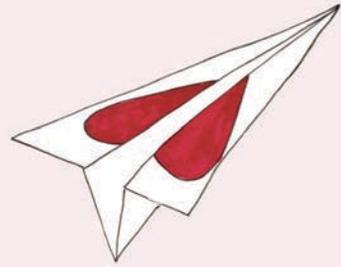


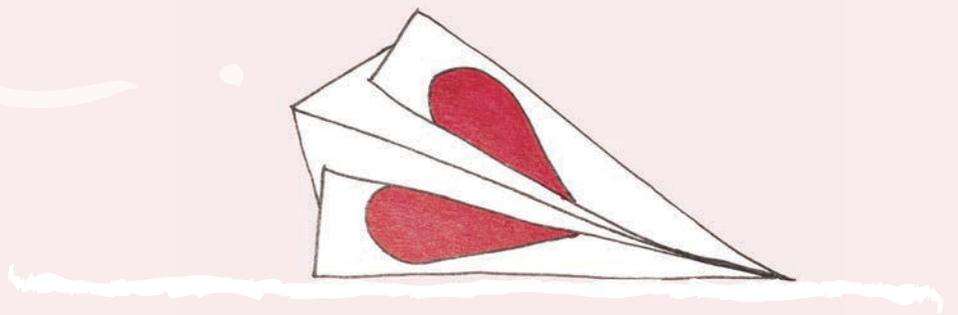
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BYSTANDER INTERVENTION & COMMUNITY CARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABOUT THIS ZINE:

Abuse and violence thrive in isolation and silence. Women, trans, and non-binary people are particularly vulnerable to abuse during social distancing and quarantine. The home is not a safe place for everyone. As feminists it is important that we embrace an ethic of care that cuts through the isolation and fosters social solidarity even if we must maintain physical distance. We also must grant compassion and permission to those who need to break the rules of social distancing in order to seek safety.

In this zine you will find some suggestions on how we can work together in our communities, families, and friend groups to break the silence on gender based violence. This is not an exhaustive list encompassing every possible method of bystander intervention. It is also important to recognize that not all of these suggestions will work in every scenario. We do hope that this will spur discussion about gender based violence, as well as creative and collective action.

1. HOW TO CHECK IN

Increased uncertainty and economic vulnerability put pressure on even the healthiest relationships. Being forced to stay inside for an indefinite period of time, sometimes in very small or crowded spaces, means even more strain on those same relationships. One thing that all of us can do in order to break the silence on gender based violence is to check in regularly with our family, friends, and community members. This means more than asking, "How are you?" It is important that we open up and encourage discussions about our relationships even if we believe that those relationships are healthy. You can do this by asking questions such as:

HAS SOCIAL DISTANCING
CHANGED YOUR
RELATIONSHIP WITH ____?

HOW HAVE YOU AND ____ BEEN
COPING WITH BEING STUCK
INSIDE TOGETHER ALL DAY, EVERY
DAY?

HOW HAS IT BEEN HAVING
____ HOME WITH YOU
ALL DAY?

I'VE NOTICED MY PARTNER AND I ARE
ARGUING MORE OFTEN NOW THAT WE'RE
TOGETHER ALL THE TIME HAVE YOU
NOTICED THE SAME THING WITH ____?



2. HOW TO ASK PROBING QUESTIONS

The questions listed in part one are great for opening up the conversation. However, sometimes you might not get the full story from those questions alone. People might be reluctant to talk about relationship problems. They might hint at problems vaguely but not share enough information for you to know if they're okay. They also may not have the privacy or safety to talk about these issues. Here are some more pointed questions you can use to encourage more details:

DO YOU HAVE A PLACE IN THE HOUSE/APARTMENT WHERE YOU CAN ENJOY PRIVACY AND ALONE TIME?

WHAT ARE WAYS THAT YOU'VE BEEN COPING WITH THE INCREASED STRAIN ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP? HOW HAS ___ BEEN COPING?

ARE YOU WORRIED THAT THE STRAIN IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WILL GET WORSE? HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF WHAT TO DO IF THAT HAPPENS? WOULD YOU LIKE HELP THINKING THROUGH THIS?



3. WHAT TO DO IF THE PERSON DOESN'T WANT TO TALK

Maybe the loved one or friend we are connecting with doesn't want to talk. Maybe they do not have the safety or privacy to talk about this. Maybe they are not emotionally ready to talk about this. There are still ways that we can extend a helping hand or a listening ear.

I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU CAN CALL OR TEXT ME ANYTIME TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING AT ALL. YOU ARE NOT A BURDEN TO ME. I ENJOY TALKING TO YOU.

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO TALK ABOUT THIS RIGHT NOW, AND THAT'S OKAY. I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT IF YOU DO WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT LATER, I AM HERE FOR YOU. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

YOU SEEM UNUSUALLY QUIET EVER SINCE I BROUGHT THIS TOPIC UP. DO YOU FEEL SAFE RIGHT NOW? I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU A CODE PHRASE THAT I WANT YOU TO SAY OR TEXT TO ME IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE AT HOME. THE CODE PHRASE IS "I'M FEELING BORED" YOU CAN SAY IT NOW OR CALL/TEXT ME WITH IT LATER. I AM HERE FOR YOU. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



4. WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A FRIEND OR LOVED ONE IS IN DANGER

If you are worried about a friend or loved one who might be experiencing an unhealthy relationship during social distancing, it is important to share this concern with them in a safe and gentle way. It can be really difficult for people to gather the courage to reach out. It is up to us to extend that bridge. It is easier for people to *feel* support if they can see that support. This might mean asking if you can Skype or Facetime with the person. It might mean dropping off food/homemade masks/supplies at their doorstep and asking them to come to a window or to the door to wave at you when you do. This visual contact can help the person to feel more confident in your support. It can also be a way for you to check for any visual cues of unhealthy relationships. Does the person look frightened or anxious? Are they trying to hide the fact they are talking to you? Do they have visible injuries? If you notice any of these things or even if you just feel that something is off it is important to share this concern. You can say things such as:



I AM WORRIED ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ____ DURING SOCIAL ISOLATION. I CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE THAT YOU SEEMED FRIGHTENED OR ANXIOUS. YOU DON'T DESERVE TO FEEL THIS WAY. YOU DESERVE TO FEEL SAFE AND COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN HOME. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT I JUST SHARED WITH YOU?

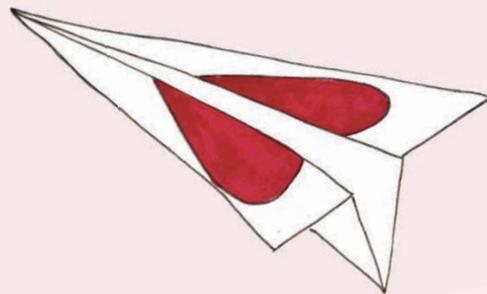
I REALLY CARE ABOUT YOU AND I'M CONCERNED THAT YOU'RE NOT SAFE AT HOME. I NOTICED A LARGE BRUISE ON YOUR ARM WHEN I DROPPED OFF FOOD YESTERDAY. I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO HARM YOU. YOU DESERVE TO BE SAFE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT FINDING A SAFER PLACE TO STAY?

I KNOW THAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING AT THIS TIME, BUT YOUR SAFETY IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME. I WANT TO INVITE YOU TO COME AND STAY WITH ME IF YOU ARE FEELING UNSAFE BEING ALONE WITH _____. YOU DESERVE TO FEEL SAFE.



OTHER TIPS:

This pandemic is somewhat unprecedented. Most of us have never been in a situation quite like this one. You might feel like you don't know the right thing to do or even what the right thing is. That is okay. There is no roadmap to the perfect solution. All we can do is move forward with compassion and willingness to connect. Some additional tips include the following:



IF A LOVED ONE BRINGS UP RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS OR VIOLENCE DON'T CHANGE THE TOPIC OR TRY TO GET THEM TO SEE THE POSITIVE. OFFER THEM SPACE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

IF A LOVED ONE HINTS AT RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS OR VIOLENCE, GENTLY ASK FOR MORE DETAILS. NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO "MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS".

IF YOU HAVE NOTICED SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE YOU CARED ABOUT IN THE PAST TAKE EXTRA CARE TO CHECK IN WITH THESE PEOPLE.

REMEMBER THAT EVEN PEOPLE WE LOVE, PEOPLE WHO WE SEE AS "GOOD PEOPLE" CAN DO TERRIBLE THINGS TO THOSE THEY LOVE. ABUSE IS SADLY COMMON IN ALL TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS.

IF SOMEONE OPENS UP TO YOU ABOUT ABUSE, BELIEVE THEM.

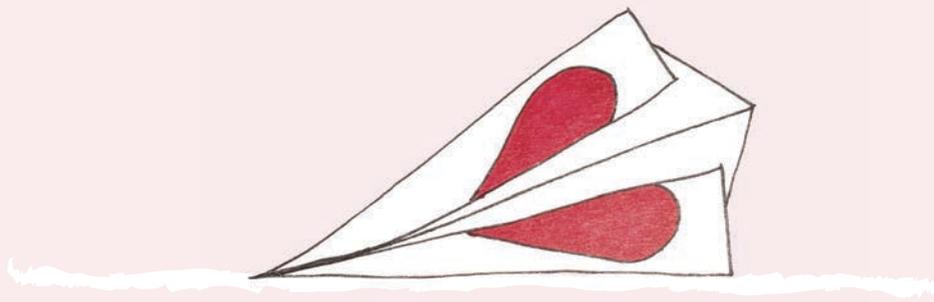
RESOURCES FOR SAFETY:

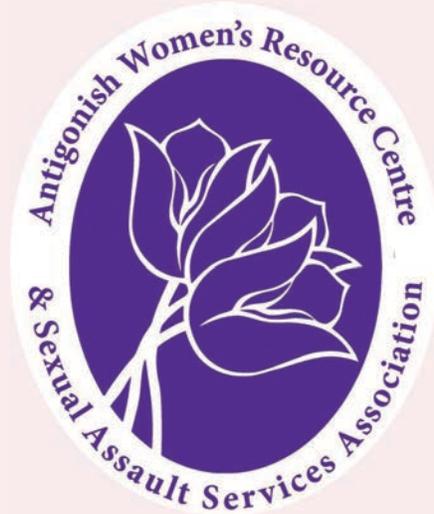
To get help in Nova Scotia you can call the Transition Houses Association of Nova Scotia at 1 855 225 0220 or visit

<http://thans.ca/get-help/find-a-shelter/>

For an interactive guide to creating a safety plan visit

<http://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/safety-planning/interactive-safety-plan/>





This zine is a project from the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association.

www.awrcsasa.ca