



## Day 4 — Listening

### 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

The experience of surviving relationship abuse is traumatic, and people in any stage of an abusive relationship should be able to depend on others for support as they process complex emotions and navigate next steps. Remember that being a victim of abuse can leave victims feeling ashamed and less-than a person. It can also leave them feeling like no one will believe them because it is somehow *their fault* or that *they were asking for it*. The truth is that regardless of how the abuse happened, **abuse is never the victim's fault and they were never asking for it**. It is worth repeating: it is important to remember to provide a sympathetic ear free of judgment. Really listen. Validate the other's person's experience and be present when victims of violence or sexual assault are ready to open-up.

You can provide essential emotional support by:

- Acknowledging that their situation is difficult, scary, and brave of them to regain control from.
- Not judging a survivor's decisions and refusing to criticize the survivor or guilt them over choices they have made.
- Remembering that you cannot "rescue them," and that decisions about their lives are up to them to make.
- Not speaking poorly of the abusive partner.
- Helping them create a safety plan.
- Continuing to be supportive of them if they do end the relationship and are understandably lonely, upset, or return to their abusive partner.
- Offering to go with them to any service provider or legal setting for moral support.

#### Gender-related killing of women and girls

More than 30,000 women per year, or 82 per day, are killed by an intimate partner. Although women and girls account for a much smaller share of total homicide than men, they bear by far the greatest burden of intimate partner/family-related homicide and intimate partner homicide.

