

What can we say?

One of the reasons religious leaders are uncomfortable getting involved with family violence victims is that they don't know what to say when someone first comes to them. How do you begin to respond? If the concern is *technical* (Where do you send someone? What resources are available?) those are easy enough to find out. We will provide you with this information.

But if the concern is *personal*, how do religious leaders begin to offer reassurance and hope? We do it by encouraging those at risk, by letting them know that help is available and we will help them find it. We do it by being good listeners and by being sensitive and encouraging and patient.

When they first come to us, these are some of the things we can say.

1. I will listen to what you have to say. I believe what you tell me.
2. I will let you know where you can turn for help.
3. No one has to live in fear. No one deserves it.
4. There are alternatives.
5. I will not press you to act. I will encourage you and support you but you are the one who knows best when and how to act.
6. I will talk to you about what you can do to be safe.
7. Everyone deserves to be safe.
8. If you need time to think about choices or what you need, I will give you all the time you need.
9. If you need practical help, I will help you find it.
10. If you just need someone to listen to you, I will do that.
11. Everything you tell me will be treated confidentially.
12. I will not become impatient, no matter how much time you need, no matter what you want to say.

13. I will not lose hope for you. You deserve a life without fear.

14. God doesn't hate you or want you to live this way. The God we believe in is a God of life and hope.

15. Your job is to decide what will help you and when and how to act. I trust your judgment. Nobody knows what you need better than you.

16. My job is to support and encourage you and to point you toward the resources and people who can help you the best.

17. We will get through this.

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