



MEMORANDUM

To: Students
From: Secure Higher Ed LLC Staff
Re: What to do if you are in an abusive relationship
Date: April 20, 2015

If you are in an abusive relationship, you should take immediate action for your own safety and the safety of your friends and family. Some suggested courses of action include:

- ✓ Call the police. The police should never interview you in the presence of the abuser. Direct the police to anything that would provide evidence that abuse took place, such as bruises, cuts, overturned furniture, broken items, and recordings. Even if the police do not believe they have sufficient evidence to make an arrest, they should be willing to escort you to a safe place away from the abuser.
- ✓ Go to a shelter. Studies show this is the single most effective thing you can do to prevent future assaults. It removes you from the violent situation and typically gives you access to counseling, legal services, and other resources that can help you successfully manage being subjected to an abusive relationship.
- ✓ Understand that you are not to blame. Abusers are adept at convincing their victims that the abuse would not have taken place but for something the victim did to provoke it. This is a lie. It is difficult to imagine a situation where anyone would be justified in physically harming someone they claim to love.
- ✓ Understand you are not trapped. Abusers often will “prepare” a victim for abuse by making the victim feel socially isolated, financially and personally dependent on the abuser, and worthless. This is a trick and a lie designed to trap you! You *can* leave an abusive relationship, and you are *not* isolated, dependent, or worthless, no matter what your abuser has told you.
- ✓ Do not be ashamed. You are not alone: a staggering number of people go through an abusive relationship. Furthermore, abusers are very adept at tricking you into believing you are in a loving relationship. Like any effective con artist, they are good conversationalists, attentive, and likeable. If they were not, they would never get away with the abuse. The truth is, everyone has been “taken in” by a con artist of some variety, whether it was a cheating romantic interest, a slick salesman, or a dishonest politician.
- ✓ Obtain a protective order. Most states have procedures by which an abuse victim can seek a court order requiring the abuser to stay away from the victim. Violation of the order is relatively easy to prove in



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this day of camera phones, and carries severe penalties including jail time.

- ✓ Talk to a family lawyer if you are married to or have children with the abuser. Even if you are not considering getting a divorce, it is smart to consult a family lawyer about child custody issues, a protective order, and asset protection.
- ✓ Gather the evidence. Take photos of bruises or cuts. Document the abuse in a journal. If it is safe to do so, also take photos of the area where the abuse took place, documenting overturned furniture or items broken, and place any weapons in plastic bags.
- ✓ Tell someone. Talk to a counselor or a trusted friend or family member about the abuse.

Abusive relationships get worse over time. Your abuser will almost certainly make every effort to convince you to stay in the relationship. Most abusers are very good at finding reasons to convince you to stay in the relationship, either through attempting to elicit sympathy from you, blaming you for the abuse, threatening physical or emotional consequences if you leave, or other means. If you stay in the relationship, your abuser will take this as a sign that you are willing to take more abuse. The sooner you end an abusive relationship, the safer you will be.