



GUIDELINES FOR IMAMS ASSISTING A VICTIM/SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

Remember the Goals:

1. SAFETY for the woman and the children
2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abuser
3. RESTORATION of individuals, and, IF APPROPRIATE, relationships
OR MOURNING the loss of the relationships.

DO'S and DON'Ts with a battered woman:

- Do believe her. Her description of the violence is only the tip of the iceberg.
- DO reassure her that this is not her fault, she doesn't deserve this treatment.
- DO give her referral information; primary resources are battered women's services or shelters and National Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233); 1-800-787-3224 (TTY). Visit www.peacefulfamilies.org for a national directory of Muslim service providers.
- DO support her and respect her choices. Even if she is aware of the risks and chooses to return to the abuser, it is her choice. She has the most information about how to survive.
- DO encourage her to think about a safety plan. Set aside some money, copies of important papers for her and children, and a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if she decides to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school, if they are asleep, etc. (This is both practical and helps her stay in touch with the reality of the abuser's violence. Safety planning is a process that is ongoing).
- DO protect her confidentiality. DO NOT give information about her or her whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. Do not discuss her situation with others in the *masjid* who might inadvertently pass information on to the abuser.
- DO help her with any religious concerns. Give her a copy of *What Islam Says About Domestic Violence*. Refer to www.faihttrustinstitute.org or call toll free 1-877-860-2255 to purchase copies of these books and receive other helpful information.

- DO emphasize that the marriage contract is broken by the violence from her partner. DO assure her of Allah's love and presence, and of your commitment to walk with her though this.
- DO help her to see that her husband's violence has broken the marriage contract, and that Allah does not want her to remain in a situation where she and her children are in danger.
- If she decides to separate and divorce, DO support her and help her to mourn the loss for herself and her children.
- DO make *du'a* with her. Ask Allah to give her the strength and courage she needs.
- DO consult with colleagues in the wider community who may have expertise and be able to assist you in your response. Refer to www.peacefulfamilies.org for resources.
- DON'T minimize the danger to her. You can be a reality check. "From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety...."
- DON'T tell her what to do. Give information and support.
- DON'T react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what she tells you. But don't react passively, either. Let her know that you are concerned and that what the abuser has done to her is wrong and not deserved by her.
- DON'T blame her for the violence. If she is blaming herself, try to reframe: "I don't care if you did have supper late or you forgot to water the lawn, that is no reason for him to be violent with you. This is his problem."
- DON'T recommend couples counseling or approach her husband and ask for "his side of the story." These actions will endanger her.
- DON'T recommend "marriage enrichment," "mediation," or a "communications workshop." None of these will address the goals listed above.
- DON'T send her home with just a prayer and a directive to submit to her husband, or to bring him to the *masjid* or to be a better wife.
- DON'T pressure her to forgive him or take him back.

*Adapted from "Responding to Domestic Violence: Guidelines for Religious Leaders," FaithTrust Institute, www.faithtrustinstitute.org