

# Building a Support System At Home



Your family may be a great resource if you're experiencing dating abuse. They may know you best and be around the most, but it can be really hard opening up to a family member. What if your parents didn't want you to date at all, and now you're in an abusive relationship? Will you get in trouble? How can you even bring up the topic to your family? What if you confide in a sibling and they tell your parents? It's understandable to be embarrassed or scared to approach family members.

We want you to feel empowered to get the support you deserve. No one should have to go through an unhealthy or abusive relationship alone. Consider these steps when turning to family members for support.

## Identify a Family Member You Trust

No one knows your situation or family better than you do. Who can you talk to in your family about what you're going through? Who's a good listener? Who has your best interest at heart? Consider which family member you are most comfortable just being around. Also, think about that person's experience with relationships. If you admire their relationships, maybe they can help you figure out what to focus on.

## Ask Yourself, "Am I Ready to Share?"

Just because you've picked a family member, doesn't mean you're ready to talk yet -- and that's ok. If you feel close to your sister but haven't spent time with her lately, try to bond more before bringing up the topic. Spending time together may help you feel more comfortable when you're ready to share. Test the waters by bringing up a related topic and gauge how your family member responds.

## Bring Up the Topic

It can be hard to talk about dating abuse. If you can't find the words to start, consider a creative icebreaker. Ask your family member to watch a movie with you and pick out a film like Lifetime's "Reviving Ophelia" ([www.mylifetime.com/movies/reviving-ophelia](http://www.mylifetime.com/movies/reviving-ophelia)). Or share an article that discusses dating abuse via email and talk about it when you get home that night. No matter how you approach the topic, you're doing the right thing by speaking out.

## Set Your Boundaries

Once you've decided to share your situation, consider what role you want your family member to play. If you only want to talk and not receive advice, kindly let them know. If you want what you share to be confidential, tell them that upfront.

Know that the family member you tell might inform someone else. If physical abuse is happening and they're worried for your safety, they may inform your school or even the police. If you tell a sibling, they may feel overwhelmed and involve your parents. Sharing can be a risk, but the support you receive may outweigh any violation of trust.

connect now!

chat at [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org)

 text "loveis" to 22522

 call 1-866-331-9474

Discuss your options anonymously.  
Peer advocates are available 24/7.

For more information, visit [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

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Please contact Break the Cycle or the National Dating Abuse Helpline for more information.

## Be Prepared for a Strong Reaction

What happens after you share? Often, family members react in a way that makes you feel like they're mad at you, when they're really mad at your abusive partner or the situation. They're upset because they love you and don't want you to be mistreated. If they start ranting against your significant other, let them know that it hurts and isn't helpful.

If you need guidance finding your support system at home, please visit [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org). We can help you find a way to open a dialogue at home.

## Get Support Other Places

Not everyone can find a support system at home. Don't worry -- there are other people in your life to help you through tough times. Please check out our pages about finding support in your community and at work at [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org).

For more information, visit [www.loveisrespect.org](http://www.loveisrespect.org)

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