



For Rabbis: What to Do When Someone Confides in You

As a Rabbi, you are uniquely positioned to change community attitudes about domestic abuse. Denial, refusal of responsibility, and blaming the victim only perpetuates the myth that domestic abuse does not happen in “respectable” Jewish homes. Domestic abuse is not just a woman’s issue: it is a **community issue**, and Rabbis can play an important role in stopping it.

If you have reason to believe that someone in your congregation or community is being abused, try to talk to them **alone**, without other family members or friends present. Listen, be patient, and offer help that you can realistically deliver. SHALVA recommends that you:

- Assure them of confidentiality.
- Listen without being judgmental.
- Believe them.
- Be supportive, not directive.
- Understand that they may need time to feel comfortable sharing information with you or taking action.
- Continue to be available for support. You might be the first person to take them seriously.
- Know your limitations. You cannot “fix” the situation, nor can you be a treatment specialist or police officer.
- Recognize that these situations can be complicated, confusing, and overwhelming.
- Let them know that they are not alone and that **SHALVA** is here to help. Have resources and information available for them to take.

We recommend that you **don’t**:

- Work with them as a couple or suggest marriage counseling.
- Reach out to the abuser without the victim’s express permission and absolute surety that they will be safe.
- Tell the abuser that the victim is coming to SHALVA or another domestic abuse agency
- Blame the victim.
- Isolate yourself—you can contact SHALVA for your own support in handling the situation.

Remember that abusive situations often escalate and become extremely dangerous. Intervention by a certified domestic abuse specialist is the safest and most appropriate assistance you can offer a victim in an abusive situation. Call SHALVA at 773-583-HOPE (4673) for support and resources.