House Sarah Resources

…..transforming the lives of those who come seeking help… 6 Desvouex Road, Road Suva 6793100665

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[www.houseofsarah.org](http://www.houseofsarah.org)

**7. Do’s and Don’ts when supporting a Survivor of Family Violence**

**Do:**

1. Find a safe place to talk.

2. Have someone else present – if this is acceptable to the survivor.

3. Allow time for the person to talk.

4. Listen to what she has to say – and take it seriously.

5. Believe her, her description of the abuse is only the tip of the iceberg.

6. Give priority to her immediate safety.

7. Empower her to make her own decisions.

8. Support and respect her choices. Even if she chooses initially to return to the abuser, it is her choice. She has the most infor­mation about how to survive. However if there are children involved their safety must come first.

9. Give her information about relevant support agencies and if appropriate, offer to contact the agency on her behalf and do so in her presence or offer a safe and private place from which she can contact the relevant agency.

10. Use the expertise of those who are properly trained.

11. Reassure her that this is not her fault, she doesn’t deserve this treatment, and it is not God’s will for her.

12. Let her know that what the abuser has done is wrong and completely unacceptable.

13. Love and support her.

14. Be patient.

15. Protect her confidentiality.

**(over)**

**Don’t:**

1. Judge her or what she tells you.

2. Make unrealistic promises.

3. Suggest that she should “try again”. Evidence shows that survivors experience a number of violent incidents before seeking help.

4. Minimise the severity of their experience or the danger they are in.

5. React with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what she tells you.

6. React passively.

7. Ask her why she did not act in a certain way.

8. Blame her for his violence.

9. Act on the person’s behalf without her consent and/or knowledge.

10. Expect her to make decisions quickly.

11. Make decisions for her or tell her what to do.

12. Recommend couple counselling/ family mediation/ mar­riage courses/ healthy relationship course. These will not help domestic abuse situations.

13. Encourage her to forgive him and take him back.

14. Send her home with a prayer/ directive to submit to her hus­band/ bring him to church/ be a better Christian wife.

15. Contact the person at home, unless they have agreed to this.

16. Approach her partner for his side of the story, this will endan­ger her.

17. Give information about her or her whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser.

18. Discuss with church leaders who might inadvertently/inten­tionally pass information on to the abuser.

19. Encourage her dependence on you or become emotionally or sexually involved with her, this will re-abuse her.

20. Do nothing.

**Adapted by the House of Sarah** [**www.houseofsarah.org**](http://www.houseofsarah.org) **for the Pacific context from the Restored Church Kit** [**www.restoredrelationships.org**](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)

A Disclosure Flow Chart –when a woman discloses abuse – from Restored Relationship [www.restoredrelationship.org](http://www.restoredrelationship.org)

**Respect and Listen**

Believe the victim

Do not ask for the proof of violence

Assure the victim it is not their fault

Reassure that confidentiality will be maintained but explain its boundaries

Be upfront about your ability to help

**Follow Child Protection Procedures** Emphasis the effects of the Family Violence on children e.g. physical danger, the effects of witnessing it.

Discuss concerns with someone who understands children and/or ask the parent to discuss with a teacher or some they trust**.**

**Are the children involved?**

**Yes**

**No**

**Is there immediate danger-** d**oes the woman feel the immediate danger?**

**No Yes**

**Safety First** Be aware that any intervention may put the victim in danger. Be guided by what the victim wants not by what you think they need. Consider the immediate time/ place constraints.

**Has further action been requested**

**No Yes**

**No Action**

Your time has been well spent the victim will know s/he will return to you for further help, that s/he has been believed ,and s/he is not in the wrong

You may be able to offer other opportunities to come and talk

You cannot make a victim of Family Violence take any action. The most you may be able to do is listens and provide information.

Do record what you have been told and your action, and note you concern. Date the record and keep it confidentially

You may want to discuss your concern with a Counsellor at the House of Sarah –if so get the permission of the victim.

**DON’T FEEL RESPONSIBLE IF CAN’T DO MORE THAN THIS**

**Action** Outline available realistic options-e.g. Police, House of Sarah, Fiji Women Crisis Centre in your area or a local counselling service, or contact your local Salvation Army Refuge (Suva, Labasa, Lautoka. – see your L**ocal Resources** information)

Supply appropriate information leaflet and contact numbers.

Make a referral on the victims behalf (with the permission) if that is wanted.

Document the incidents and action s and keep safely.

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