

Avoiding Common Mistakes

1. Believe her.

Cases of abuse are almost always a “he said, she said” situation. There is rarely any hard evidence.

Are you concerned she may be exaggerating? → Survivors of abuse tend to minimize.

Are you concerned she may be lying, or creating a reason for divorce? → Leaving is too hard.

How do you know he is abusing her? → Patterns of abuse.

2. Domestic abuse is not an incident. It is a pattern of behavior.

3. Do not tell her to submit.

4. Do not take control of her life.

Help her process her situation by asking her questions, presenting her with options, and helping her think through the consequences. But leave all decision making up to her.

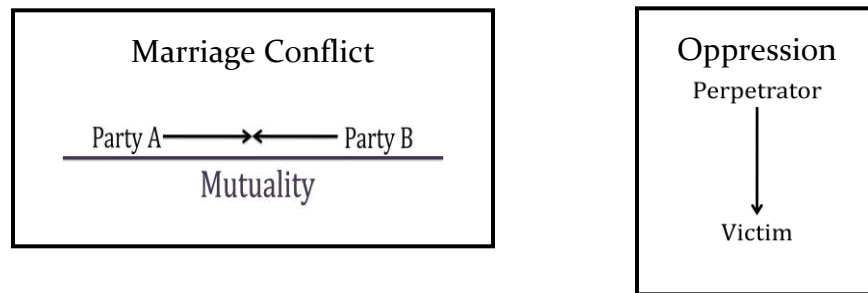
Reasons to avoid taking control of her life:

- The best thing for her recovery is to make her own decisions.
- Your conscience.
- The survivor knows her abuser far better than anyone else.

Examples:

- When and if to call the police
- Contacting and networking with other organizations
- Allowing her to go back to the abuser

5. Do not approach domestic abuse as a marriage conflict, but as a case of oppression.



6. Do not recommend or conduct marriage counseling.

He will feel singled out.

She will feel at fault for the abuse.

The survivor has to choose between concealing the truth or being abused.

Tips for identifying an abusive relationship during marriage counseling:

- Know the patterns of abuse.
- Be sensitive to small hints the survivor may give, or to opportunities she may try to create to tell you about the abuse.
- Make it your policy to have the second counseling session be individualized.