

What a Faith Leader Can Do to Prevent and Intervene in Domestic and other Family Violence

By weaving an awareness of abuse issues into the fabric of your congregation, you can be a true sanctuary of peace. Add your own ideas about how to integrate abuse prevention themes into sermons, education, and training opportunities.

- Articulate in your words and model in your actions the essence of healthy relationships and sanctuary.
- Practice self-care and prioritize your own primary/family relationships.
- Pay attention to how references to family, partner, parent & child obligations and ethics are worded and discussed. Be sensitive to the fact that not all relationships are loving or well-intentioned. What does "honor your father & mother" mean if you are abused by one of them?
- Be careful not to assume that all marriages/relationships are healthy.
- Require fingerprinting for all those that work with children or youth.
- Become politically active around issues of abuse prevention.
- Honor abused persons during religious services and ceremonies: e.g. "This prayer is for persons who are abused in their own homes..."
- Become familiar with ways in which sermons and text have (a) reinforced tolerance of abuse and (b) spoken out against abuse. Develop alternatives.
- Publicly recognize October as domestic violence awareness month. Wear a purple ribbon in honor of abused women. If Jewish, tie a purple ribbon to your Sukkah.
- Publicly recognize April as child abuse prevention month. Wear a blue ribbon in honor of abused children.

- When discussing the Exodus or other liberation texts or events, include those who remain enslaved today, or discuss who our current “Pharaohs” are.
- Openly mention and discuss references to domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and other abuses of power that occur in sacred writings. Choose one of these topics for a sermon or discussion.
- Identify and use community support systems and resources.
- Serve on a county domestic violence or child abuse prevention council, or participate in other efforts to end abuse.
- Advocate publicly for violence-free families.
- Volunteer at your local domestic violence agency or at a child abuse center.
- Remember your professional specialty as a spiritual guide and support and as a community leader.
- Speak out against abuse.
- Support local domestic violence, elder and child abuse agencies through affirming their work publicly and in the pulpit.
- Invite an expert from the local domestic violence and/or child abuse program to speak to your membership.
- Encourage members to do a volunteer project or collect needed material goods or money for local abuse programs.
- Report suspected child abuse, dependent adult and elder abuse to appropriate civil authorities.
- Refer abuse victims and offenders to specialized community services for help.
- Include “those abused in their own homes” in prayers and during healing services and ceremonies.