



HANDS LIFTING HEARTS
INITIATIVES SOCIETY
RESOURCE 13

WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU.

How family, friends, elders and faith leaders can respond with care

For African, Black and Caribbean families, youth, and caregivers in Alberta

Your first response can help someone feel heard, believed and supported.

Family Violence Prevention /
Breaking Silence, Building Safety

Sponsored by the Ministry of Children and Family
Services, Government of Alberta
CONTACT US | admin@handsliftinghearts.ca

Alberta
Government

You may be the first person they tell

In many of our communities, problems are taken to family, elders or the church or mosque before any agency. This guide helps you listen well, keep the person safe and connect them with support.

Make this your own

Tick boxes and type in the spaces, or print and write by hand. Use a PDF reader that supports forms. You can skip any question, pause, or return later. There are no scores. Save only if it is safe to keep your answers.

Privacy matters. A completed workbook may contain personal information. Use a device and storage location you trust. If someone monitors your device, consider using a safer device or completing the activities without recording answers.

Choose an activity

Listen, believe, support

Words that help, words that hurt

What not to do

Their safety, their choice

Looking after yourself

Support you can choose

Safety first: If someone is in immediate danger, call 911. If you have reasonable and probable grounds to believe a child is being harmed or is in danger of harm, you have a duty to report. Call Child Intervention at 1-800-638-0715; call 911 for immediate danger.

Listen, believe, support

A response roadmap for a private, unhurried conversation.



In immediate danger, call 911. For family violence support, call or text 310-1818. Explain limits on confidentiality before making promises.

Words that help, words that hurt

Choose Helps or Hurts.

	Helps	Hurts
1. "Thank you for trusting me."	☐	☐
2. "What did you do to make him angry?"	☐	☐
3. "You don't deserve to be treated this way."	☐	☐
4. "Pray about it and be patient. Marriage is hard."	☐	☐
5. "Think of the children and the family name."	☐	☐
6. "Whatever you decide, I will support you."	☐	☐

Compare: Rows 1, 3 and 6 help. Rows 2, 4 and 5 blame the person or ask them to endure harm, even when meant kindly. Faith can be a strength; it should never be used to keep someone in danger.

One thought or next step I want to keep

What not to do

Do not confront the person causing harm. It can increase danger.

Do not arrange a family meeting or mediation with both people when there is fear or violence.

Do not share what you were told without their agreement, unless a legal reporting duty or an immediate safety emergency requires it. Explain limits on confidentiality.

Do not promise to keep everything secret.

Do not pressure them to leave or to stay.

One thought or next step I want to keep

Their safety, their choice

People leave, stay or return for many reasons: children, money, immigration, faith, love, fear. Your role is to stay a safe person through all of it.

How I can stay in contact safely

A code word or sign we could agree on

Practical help I could offer (childcare, a ride, a place to keep documents)

One thought or next step I want to keep

Looking after yourself

Hearing about abuse can be heavy.

- ☐ I know my limits
- ☐ I have someone I can talk to (without sharing names)
- ☐ I know where to refer

What I will do to rest after a hard conversation

For faith leaders and elders: consider inviting Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society to speak with your congregation or community group.

One thought or next step I want to keep

Support you can choose

You do not have to complete this workbook alone. In immediate danger, call 911. Click a service name for its official information.

Family Violence Info Line

Call or text 310-1818. Available 24/7; phone support in 170+ languages.

Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society

admin@handsliftinghearts.ca | handsliftinghearts.ca

Kids Help Phone

Call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868.

ShelterSafe

Find women's shelters and support services across Canada.

211 Alberta

Call or text 211, or use online chat to find local services.

Plan for your safety

Government of Canada safety planning information.

Report a child safety concern

Child Intervention: 1-800-638-0715 (24/7).

One support option I may want to explore

Sources and further reading

[Alberta reporting child abuse](#)

Support information checked October 15, 2026. This workbook is not a substitute for personalised safety planning, legal advice or professional support.

Prepared as part of the Hands Lifting Hearts Initiatives Society Family Violence Prevention: Breaking Silence, Building Safety Toolkit. Images are AI-generated and do not depict participants.