College Relationship Violence Power & Control Wheel for Bystanders

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Message to those hoping to help a friend they believe may be in an unhealthy relationship: It's not uncommon to think "why don't they just leave?" Unhealthy relationships experience what is termed the "cycle of violence." This cycle consists of: a tension building phase, the abuser's violent outburst and a final period when the abuser seeks forgiveness and things will be good. However, the cycle inevitably continues and escalates. Victims become accustomed to the pattern and put up with the abusive behavior because they know that a good period will follow.

The best thing you can do is be there for your friend, let them know that you are always there to listen. Learn about the local resources available, talk with a counselor at your school or call your local hotline for advice and support. There are no guarantees, but someday your friend may gather the courage to make the break and you'll be prepared. Note: if you are ever in fear for your or your friend's physical safety contact your campus or local police immediately. The most dangerous time for a victim is right after they leave the relationship.