

# THE SIGNAL FOR HELP RESPONDER'S ACTION WORKSHOP

You can be that judgment-free friend,

family member, or co-worker  
we all need in our lives.



**ZONTA**  
INTERNATIONAL  
DISTRICT 4



CANADIAN  
WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION

FONDATION  
CANADIENNE  
DES FEMMES



Open Palm



Tuck Thumb



Trap Thumb

## What Do I Do if I See Someone Use the Signal for Help?

1. Silently nod and verbally continue the conversation as normal. This allows the "Signaller" to know you understand, without alerting anyone who might be listening to the conversation.
2. Reach out to them safely to find out what they need. Let the person using the Signal take the lead.
  - a. They may ask you to listen and be there for them.
  - b. They may ask for help finding services.
  - c. They may want you to call someone to help them, such as family or emergency services.\*

**\*do not assume what they want or need at the moment - involving emergency services can escalate the situation making it more dangerous for those involved.**

3. If you see the Signal for Help in public or out of a window or door, calling 911 or emergency services is an appropriate response.

# How Can I Reach Out Safely?

1

Call them personally and start by asking them if they are alone.

**Examples:** *Is this a good time to talk?*

*Is anyone home?*

*Should I call back later?*

Be ready to respond if you think they might not be safe to talk right then. Example: “Someone is trying to get through to me. I need to call you back.” Respond with yes or no questions like the examples on Step 2

2

Ask questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no”.

**Examples:** *Would you like me to call a shelter or service on your behalf?*

*Should I look for services that might help you and call you back?*

*Would you like me to call 911?*

3

Send a text, WhatsApp message, or email message, and ask general questions.

**Examples:** *How are you doing?*

*Get in touch when you can, I would love to catch up.*

People in violent homes and relationships may be closely monitored. The person abusing them may watch where they go, who they call or text, what they do on social media, and more. These options can help you find out what’s wrong in a safer way.

# Breakout Groups

## Let's Practice What to Say

### *Small Groups:*

- 1. Establish Who is the "Signaler" and Who is the "Responder"*
- 2. Responder will use Yes or No Questions*
- 3. Signaler will lead narrative (ie. safe/unsafe to talk, support needed, in immediate danger call 911)*
- 4. Reverse roles and repeat*

This exercise is to help "Responders" become comfortable with supporting the "Signaler" by asking the right "yes or no" questions without jeopardizing the safety of the "Signaler".

Use this space to write down phrases you feel comfortable using or phrases your partner used that you liked.

Practice, practice, practice! The more you practice, the more natural you will become with asking the "right" yes/no questions when responding to a signaller. **Remember, not everyone knows the signal for help and may "Signal" you in a different way. Trust your instincts and reach out!**

# How Can I Support Someone Facing Abuse?



## Remember that abuse is common.

Many people experience it, and many people perpetrate it. But abuse is not inevitable. We all have to play a part in ending it.



## Be proactive.

Find ways to demonstrate your compassion toward people going through abuse. Let them know that if they are going through anything difficult, you will be there to support them.



## Learn about the resources and services in your area.

You can start with the resources that we will provide to you as part of this workshop.

## If someone tells you that they are experiencing abuse, here's how you can support:

1

### Focus on the person being hurt.

Your job is to support them. Make sure you are not putting your anger, shock, sadness, or fear first in the conversation.

2

### Everyone copes with abuse differently.

They may do things differently than you. That is okay. Be there to support them as they explore what works for them.

3

### Listen and let them lead.

Instead of telling them what you would do or what they should do, ask them how you can best support them.

4

### Be judgment-free.

Instead of saying "What did you do?", "How did you make them mad?", "Why don't you leave?" or "You chose this relationship," say:

***"It's not your fault.", "I'm here for you.", "How are you doing right now?"***

5

### Be patient and open-minded.

Abusive relationships are complicated, scary, confusing, and traumatic. Figuring things out takes time. You may need to have more conversations with this person. Don't push. There is no one right answer, no quick fix, and everyone deals with these things differently.

# Frequently Asked Questions:

## **Does the Signal for Help mean “call the authorities right away”?**

No. It signifies “reach out to me safely.” The person using the Signal may want you to call authorities, but do not assume that is what they want or need. Let them take the lead.

## **Does the Signal stand for something? What if I see something like it being used and I’m not sure what it means?**

The Signal for Help is not meant to represent anything in any sign language. If you see someone using a gesture that looks like the Signal for Help and you are not certain what it means, consider the context in which they are using it. When it is safe to contact them, ask them to clarify if they need your help.

## **What if an abuser learns about the Signal for Help?**

An abuser might learn about the Signal. And people in abusive situations are also often closely monitored and may not feel safe to use it. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for everyone in every situation. The Signal for Help is a tool some people might use, some of the time.

## **What if someone can’t use the Signal for Help?**

Other resources and services may help them. If you suspect someone you know is in danger and cannot use the Signal, you can still safely check-in using the tips above.

# Continue Your Journey: Become a Signal for Help Responder

**Go to [signalresponder.ca](https://signalresponder.ca) to join  
a community of active learners**

You will get useful tips and information. You’ll get access to training to build your knowledge, and practice and test your skills. You’ll learn more ways to take action and to become a more supportive friend, family member, and coworker.

# Important Services to Know

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 or your local emergency number. Many services are open all the time (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) and can provide help in many different languages.

## US-Wide Resources:

- United Way Helpline: Call 211, <https://www.211.org/>
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 <https://ncadv.org/get-help>
- Online domestic violence shelter search: <https://www.domesticshelters.org/>
- Trans Lifeline: 1-877-565-8860, <https://translifeline.org/>
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673), <https://www.rainn.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- Gender-Based Violence Resource Library: <https://vawnet.org/>
- National Coalition Against Domestic Violence <https://ncadv.org/resources>

## Canada-wide:

- 211: call to find any service in your area
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-6868 | Text 686868
- ShelterSafe.ca: online map that connects you to your local shelter or transition house for help or info
- Trans Lifeline: 877-330-6366

## Canadian Web Resources:

- Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse: <https://cnpea.ca/en/>
- Draw The Line: Engaging Ontarians in a dialogue about sexual violence: <http://draw-the-line.ca/>
- Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence-knowledge-centre.html>
- National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence: <https://www.nacafv.ca/>
- Neighbours, Friends and Families: <http://neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca/>

**Add your Local Service providers here:**

**Tip: Save these phone numbers on your mobile/email/contact list, so that you can easily share them with others, or contact directly for the "Signaller" quickly and easily.**

***Host Your Own Signal For Help,  
Responder Workshop  
Scan this QR Code to Download  
"The Workshop Kit"  
(Includes: Presentation Link & Guide &  
Responder Action Worksheet)***

