

## Talking about Your Relationship with Your Partner

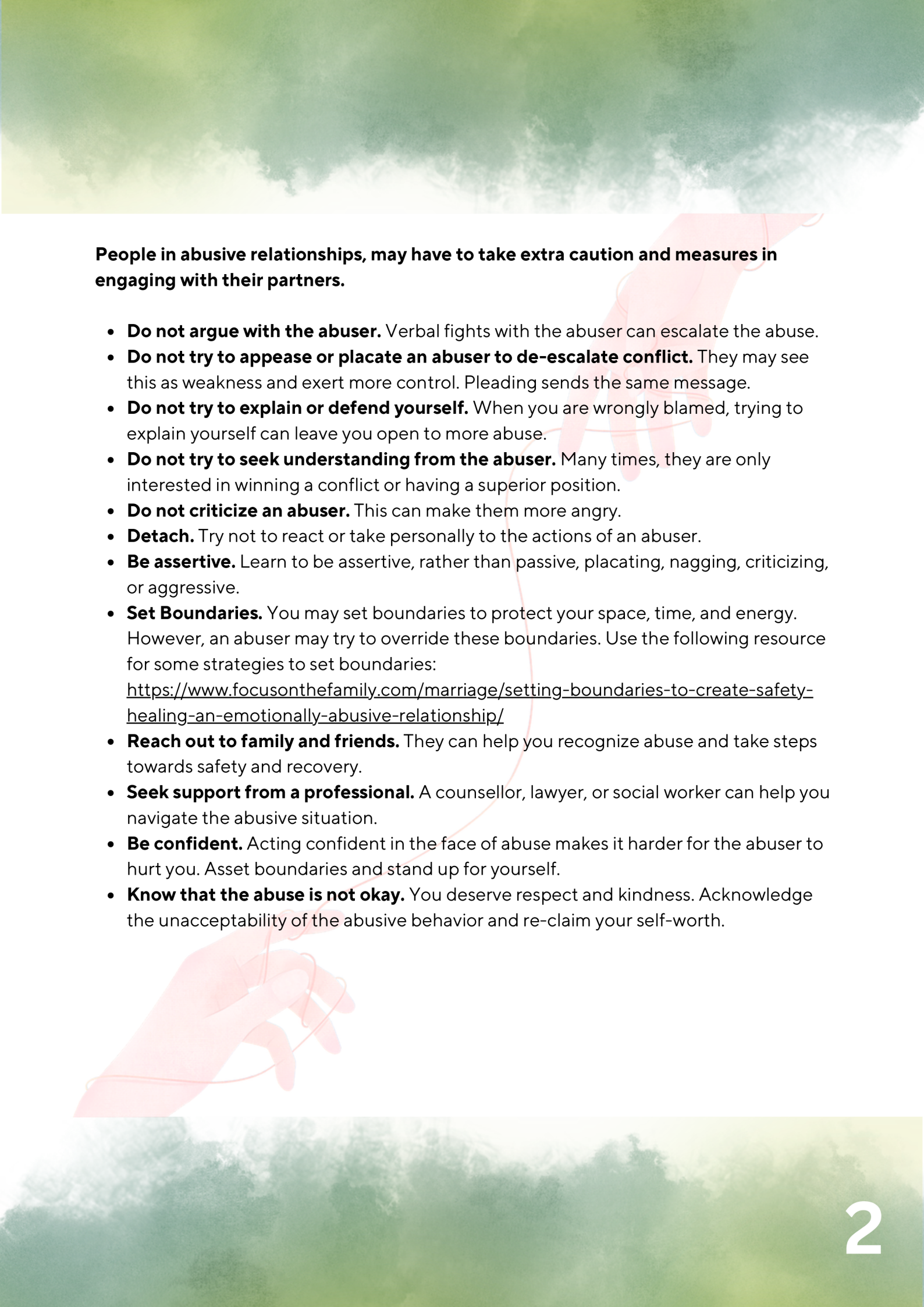
If you notice challenges in your relationship, you can work to improve them, especially if you have a healthy or unhealthy relationship. Below are some pointers for having difficult conversations with your partner about the nature of your relationship.

- **Choose a good time and place.** Sometimes being side-by-side with someone is easier than face-to-face for difficult conversations. You can have a conversation while going on a walk together. Choose a time when your partner is not already stressed out.
- **Do not attack.** Instead of blaming or attacking your partner, try to understand their challenges and needs. Listen to them.
- **Speak to your emotions.** “I’m angry that you made me look like a fool in front of the family”.
- **Talk about how you perceived yourself.** That made me feel like I was not important to you.
- **Speak to how you perceived your partner.** I thought you did it on purpose.
- **Speak to your deeper emotions and relationship longing.** When that happened, I felt hurt and unloved.
- **Speak to your relationship need.** I need to know that I still matter to you and that you can have my back.
- **Speak to what you need as a repair.** I could really use a hug right now.

**Beyond this there are many things you can discuss with your partner to make your relationship more healthy:**

- The distribution of household chores and responsibilities.
- Parenting Styles and needs
- How you relate to your parents, in-laws, and extended family
- Your boundaries and need for time together and apart
- Your financial decisions
- How you both communicate with each other





**People in abusive relationships, may have to take extra caution and measures in engaging with their partners.**

- **Do not argue with the abuser.** Verbal fights with the abuser can escalate the abuse.
- **Do not try to appease or placate an abuser to de-escalate conflict.** They may see this as weakness and exert more control. Pleading sends the same message.
- **Do not try to explain or defend yourself.** When you are wrongly blamed, trying to explain yourself can leave you open to more abuse.
- **Do not try to seek understanding from the abuser.** Many times, they are only interested in winning a conflict or having a superior position.
- **Do not criticize an abuser.** This can make them more angry.
- **Detach.** Try not to react or take personally to the actions of an abuser.
- **Be assertive.** Learn to be assertive, rather than passive, placating, nagging, criticizing, or aggressive.
- **Set Boundaries.** You may set boundaries to protect your space, time, and energy. However, an abuser may try to override these boundaries. Use the following resource for some strategies to set boundaries:  
<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/setting-boundaries-to-create-safety-healing-an-emotionally-abusive-relationship/>
- **Reach out to family and friends.** They can help you recognize abuse and take steps towards safety and recovery.
- **Seek support from a professional.** A counsellor, lawyer, or social worker can help you navigate the abusive situation.
- **Be confident.** Acting confident in the face of abuse makes it harder for the abuser to hurt you. Asset boundaries and stand up for yourself.
- **Know that the abuse is not okay.** You deserve respect and kindness. Acknowledge the unacceptability of the abusive behavior and re-claim your self-worth.