

Time for tea



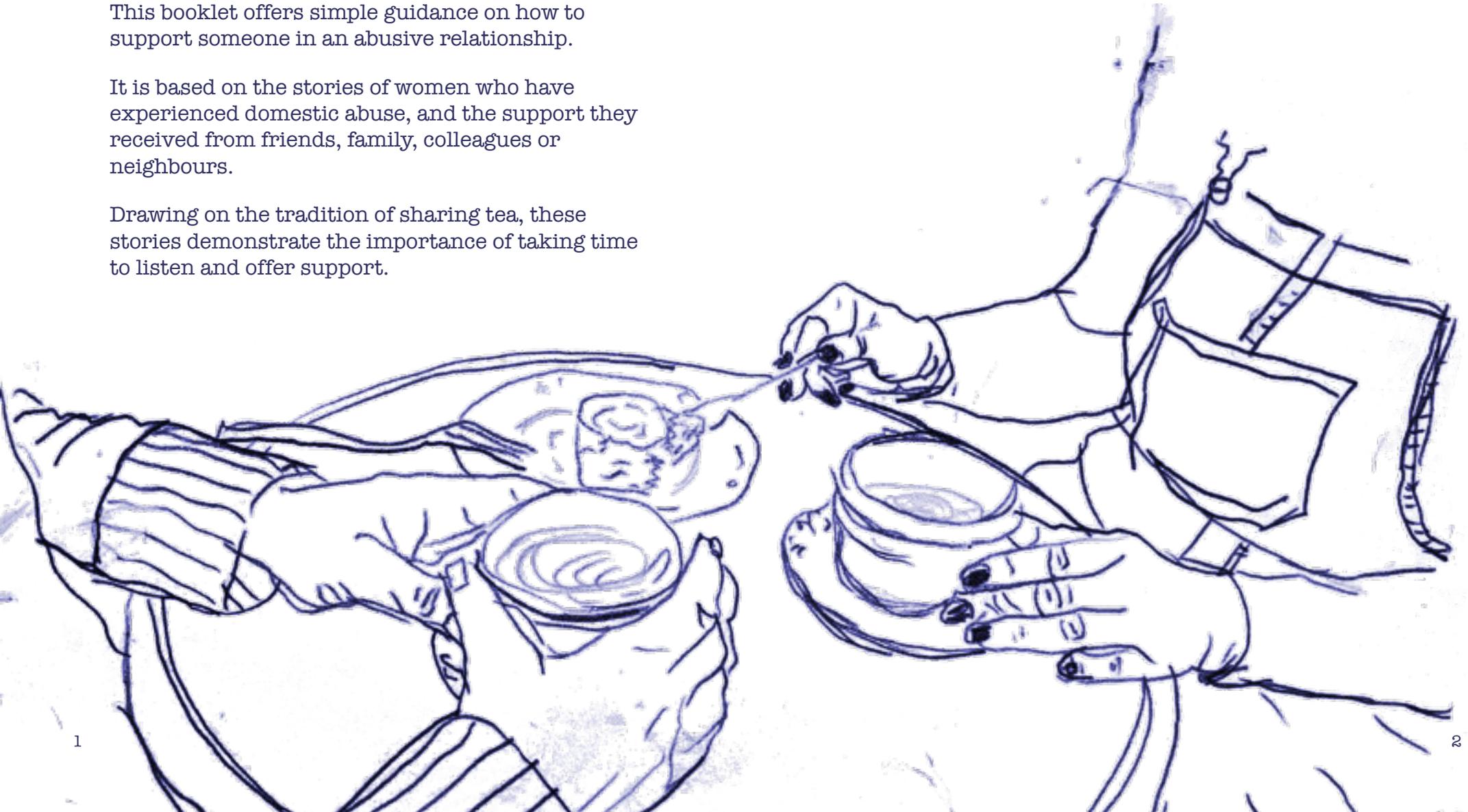
How you can support
someone experiencing
domestic abuse

Some times just listen, listen and bring comfort, or even just bring tea

This booklet offers simple guidance on how to support someone in an abusive relationship.

It is based on the stories of women who have experienced domestic abuse, and the support they received from friends, family, colleagues or neighbours.

Drawing on the tradition of sharing tea, these stories demonstrate the importance of taking time to listen and offer support.



How your support can make a difference

As a friend, relative, neighbour or colleague, domestic abuse can be uncomfortable to talk about*. While it is not your responsibility to stop the abuse, positive support can help victims to:

- feel safer
- feel supported to make changes in their relationship, if desired
- reach out for help from the police or domestic abuse organisations
- feel mentally and physically stronger

I can't stress enough the importance of their support – they helped me to get through it much easier... even now as I think about it, I can see how empowered I feel having them

Giving lots of encouragement, even if it's just simple advice, it makes such a big difference

* Schucan Bird, K., Stokes, N., & Rivas, C. (2024), Enabling Workplace and Community Responses to Domestic Abuse: A Mixed Method Systematic Review of Training for Informal Supporters, *Health & Social Care in the Community*

I told her about my situation and she said, "you're doing the right thing". I always remember those words. I still cry about it, but this really gives me strength



If you're planning on reaching out to someone close to you, start by considering **safety** – theirs and your own. Think about safe ways to contact them first.

I didn't realise that I was suffering financial and psychological abuse. I was so trapped



What is domestic abuse?

There are many types of abuse. The UK Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines abusive behaviour as:

“**physical** or **sexual** abuse; **violent** or **threatening** behaviour; **controlling** or **coercive** behaviour; **economic** abuse; **psychological**, **emotional** or other abuse; and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.”

Most victims experience many types of abuse at the same time.

When they listed the types of abuse, I could tick every single one and I was like... this is really serious

A lot of people are not aware of the effects of domestic abuse and, to be fair, I didn't really understand it myself. I didn't realise that psychological abuse came under the umbrella of domestic abuse

How to recognise abuse

Someone may be in an abusive relationship if they:

- are persistently belittled by their partner or told that they never do anything right
- are prevented from spending time with their friends, family or peers
- are insulted, demeaned or shamed by their partner in front of other people
- are prevented from making decisions about their daily life
- are intimidated or threatened by their partner
- have their belongings damaged or taken away
- have no control over their own finances
- are subject to extreme and constant jealousy

One or more of these behaviours is a warning sign for abuse.



Putting you down...
disrespecting you

By coming to the UK, he was actually isolating me. Bringing me here was the first step of not being connected with my family, stopping me talking to them

These are the really big red flags... but there are little, creeping things like whether they have access to your mobile phone

How to support someone before they are ready to talk

Most victims talk to a friend, relative or neighbour about their abusive partner but typically only after a long period of abuse. There are many barriers to talking about abuse.

56% of people were too embarrassed to tell someone and 48% did not think that they would be believed

Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2023

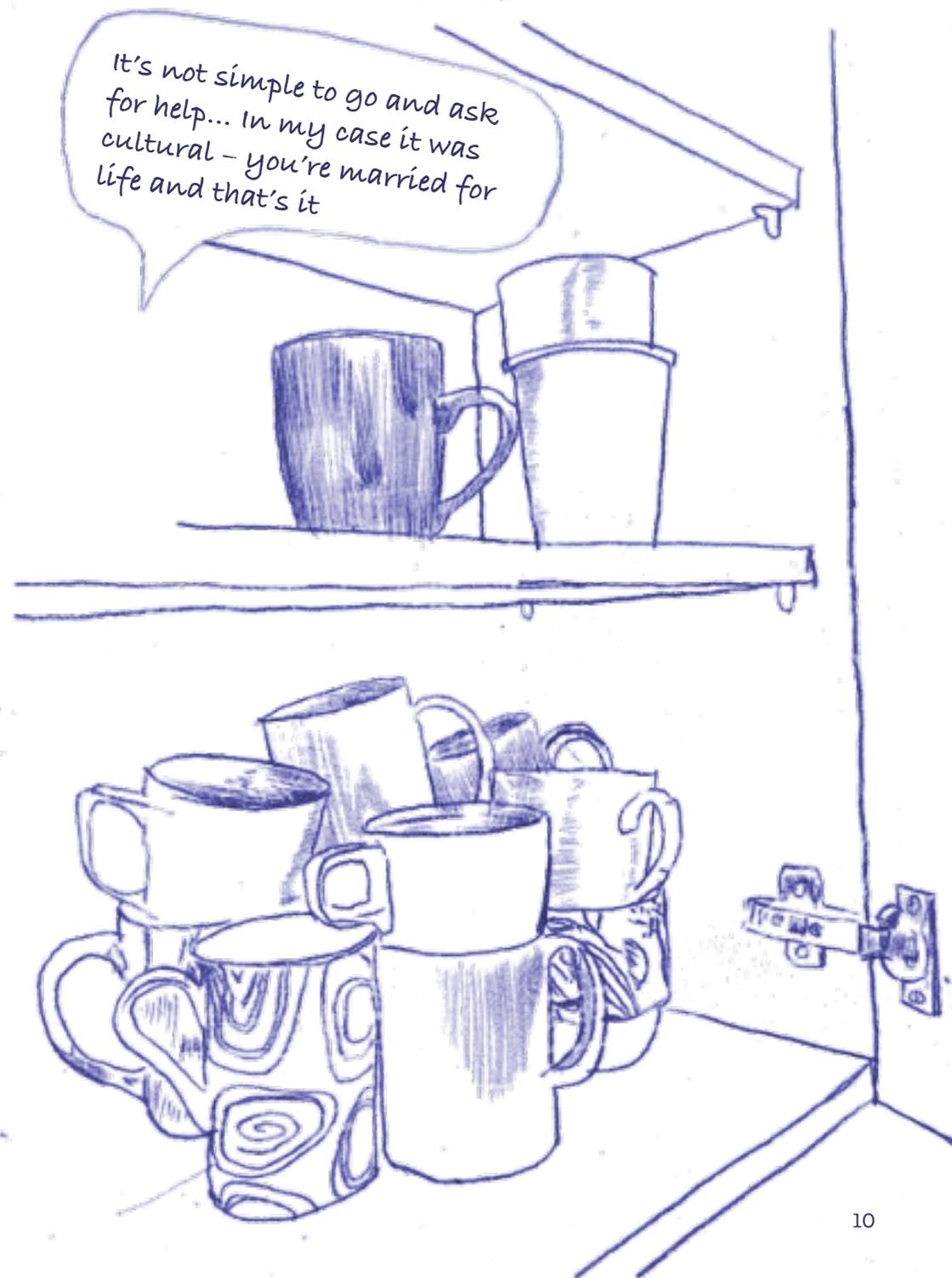
If someone is not ready to talk, you can offer support by:

- showing that you are ready to listen and can be trusted
- creating a space in which your friend, relative or neighbour can confide in you and feel safe
- being patient and recognising that it is not easy to talk about experiences of abuse

I withdrew from friends... I didn't want to meet up because I would have to talk about it and maybe I don't trust them enough

The fear of judgement is very important... that's the reason for being silent

Embarrassment stopped me from telling anybody



How to respond when someone tells you about abuse

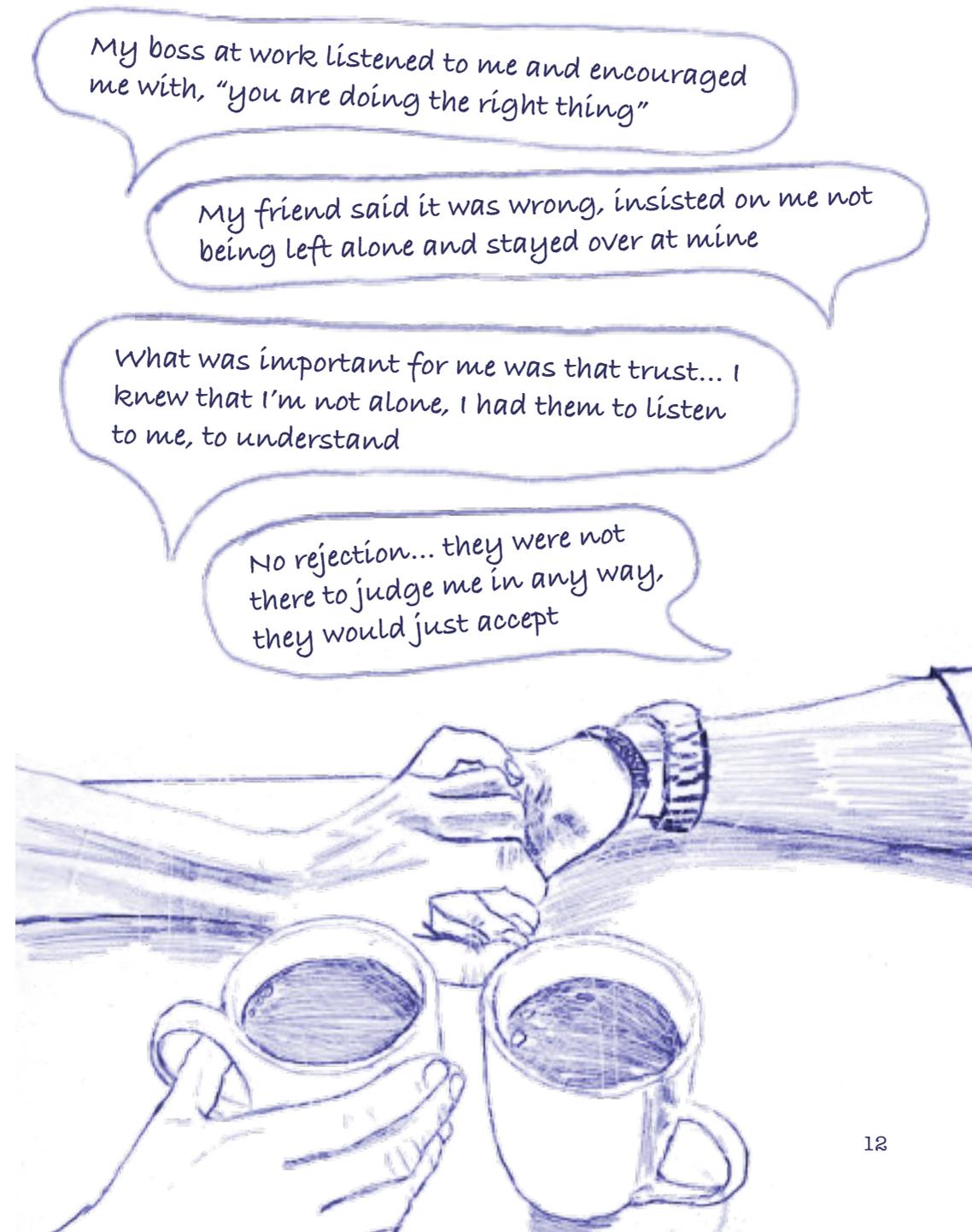
87% of victims appreciate friends or family who will listen to them and be sympathetic*

When someone is ready to talk, you can respond by:

- listening without blame or judgement
- showing empathy and understanding: **“that sounds difficult and I’m sorry to hear that”**
- recognising that the abuse is not their fault: **“what’s happening to you is wrong”**
- making it clear that you believe them and validating their feelings and experiences: **“I believe you”**
- asking them **“how can I help?”** and offering immediate practical support, such as a place to stay or thinking through their safety

Always respect the choices of those experiencing abuse.

* Shin N. & Park E. (2021), The Influence of Informal Support on Battered Women’s Use of Formal Services, *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 30:9, 1203-1219





Taking me for a walk helped

How to offer ongoing support

As well as empathetic listening, victims appreciate friends or family who:

- offer emotional support
- provide social contact and interaction
- offer practical help such as looking after children or providing a place to store their belongings*

* Sylaska K. M. and Edwards K. M. (2014), Disclosure of intimate partner violence to informal social support network members: a review of the literature, *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 15:1, 3-21

My friend agreed to store some of my stuff in her attic... no questions asked

When my friend did her own research to understand where I was at it made me feel safe and understood

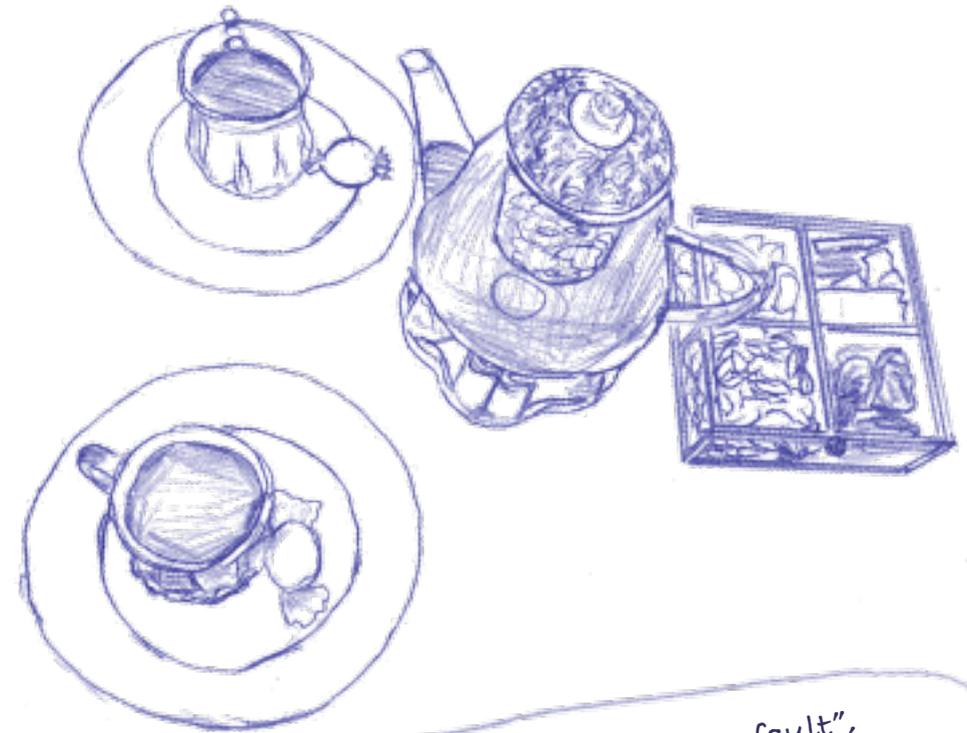
Just being there for me whenever I wanted her

Good things and nice stuff to do together and to cheer me up... to spend time in a nice environment

How you can support someone experiencing domestic abuse

It's not your responsibility to stop domestic abuse but you can offer support by:

- being aware of domestic abuse - which comes in many forms - and recognising the warning signs
- being patient and ready to listen, recognising that it is difficult to talk about experiences of domestic abuse
- considering safety before reaching out, theirs and yours: find safe ways to meet and talk
- listening without judgement
- keeping lines of communication open and being available to offer support
- reaching out to national and local organisations that can offer support (there are some listed in the back of this booklet)



*When someone says "it's not your fault",
"you didn't do anything wrong", it makes
you alive again... gives you strength*

Supporting a friend, relative or neighbour experiencing abuse is difficult, so take steps to look after yourself too.

Nourish your mental, emotional and physical wellbeing by talking to your own support network, be compassionate with yourself and make time for leisure activities.

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Getting further help

If you would like to talk to someone about domestic abuse, you can ring:

National Domestic Abuse Helpline (England)
0808 200 0247

Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline (Northern Ireland)
0808 802 1414

Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline (Scotland)
0800 027 1234

Live Fear Free Helpline (Wales)
0808 8010 800

Find out more at: safelives.org.uk/reach-in

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If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 999 and ask for the police.

In England and Wales, 1.4 million women and 751,000 men experienced domestic abuse in 2022

Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2023

As a friend, relative, colleague or neighbour, domestic abuse can be uncomfortable to talk about.

While it is not your responsibility to stop the abuse, this booklet can help you to know how to respond in positive and helpful ways.



Find out more

