

# IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP AFFECTING YOUR HEALTH?

## A Tool for Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in Healthcare Settings



Designed for use in a variety of health care settings, the “Is Your Relationship Affecting Your Health?” patient safety card helps healthcare providers prompt conversations with patients about how relationships can impact their health. The card includes information on recognizing unhealthy or abusive behaviors, safety planning strategies, and national hotlines for anonymous support.

A universal education approach using the “Is Your Relationship Affecting Your Health?” card helps patients understand how relationships can affect their wellbeing, reduces stigma, and opens a pathway to safety and healing.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Many adults (40-50%) experience control or harm in their intimate relationships,(CDC 2022)<sup>1</sup> and the impacts of these experiences often show up in healthcare settings: chronic pain, anxiety, sleep disruption, missed appointments, or difficulty managing chronic conditions. (Stubbs 2022)<sup>2</sup>

Survivors of IPV may feel shame, fear, or concern about mandatory reporting, and thus may be reluctant to disclose abuse (Heron 2021)<sup>3</sup>. Healthcare providers are uniquely positioned to offer support to all patients without requiring disclosure.



### AS PART OF THE CUES INTERVENTION, SHARING THIS SAFETY CARD WITH ALL PATIENTS:

- Normalizes conversations about relationships, trauma history, safety, and health in routine healthcare and community-based settings.
- Affirms survivors' strength and resilience while offering practical tools for promoting safety, wellbeing, and healing. And, most importantly,
- Ensures patients can get support without having to disclose abuse to their provider.

## THIS CARD IS DESIGNED FOR USE WITH THE EVIDENCE-BASED “CUES” INTERVENTION

### CONFIDENTIALITY

- Always review the limits of your confidentiality as a provider at the start of the conversation.
- Meet with patients alone for part of every visit to ensure privacy and safety during conversations about relationships and abuse.

### UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

- Share information from the safety card about complex or unhealthy relationships with all adult patients and where to get support for oneself or a friend. Intimate partner violence and coercion are common, and many patients have reasons that prevent them from speaking openly. Sharing this information ensures that every patient receives support and resources without needing to disclose abuse.
- Give two cards so patients can keep one and share another with a friend, coworker, or family member. CUES draws on research about altruism and the healing effect of helping others. The “Is Your Relationship Affecting Your Health?” card includes specific guidance for supporting a friend who may be experiencing harm.
- Create open-ended space for patients to share if they want to: “Is any of this a part of your story?”

### SUPPORT

- Though getting a disclosure is not the goal of CUES, because you have created space for a safer conversation, you may find that patients are more likely to share what they have been through. Listen and validate what you hear.
- Offer health promotion strategies and develop a care plan that considers the impact of relationship stress or abuse on the patient’s safety and health.
- Provide a warm referral to a local domestic or sexual violence advocacy program or the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Sharing this card doesn’t require much extra time; it simply embeds conversations about relationship health into routine care. By offering universal education and nonjudgmental support, providers create a safer environment for survivors, strengthen trust, and help patients access resources that can improve health and safety—whether or not they disclose abuse.



### Need to order safety cards?

Order copies of Is Your Relationship Affecting Your Health? Safety Card and other resources: [store.futureswithoutviolence.org](https://store.futureswithoutviolence.org).

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3. Heron RL, Eisma MC. Barriers and facilitators of disclosing domestic violence to the healthcare service: A systematic review of qualitative research. Health Soc Care Community. 2021 May;29(3):612-630. doi: 10.1111/hsc.13282. Epub 2021 Jan 13. PMID: 33440034; PMCID: PMC8248429.