

Why Not Just Leave?

Upon learning that someone is in an abusive relationship, many people ask 'why not just leave?' The question may appear reasonable, but it blames the victim for being in the situation. We call this victim-blaming. It is never the victim's fault that abuse is happening.

Unless you have lived in an abusive situation, it is hard to understand all of the dynamics. No one starts out in a relationship to be abused. Abuse can begin subtly and grow. Many victims do not see it as abuse themselves and do not understand the danger they are in.

We can at least try to understand some of the traps that may keep victims in the relationship. It must be the victim's decision to leave – remember that they are most at risk when planning to leave or just after leaving the relationship. The challenge for people who care about a victim is to find meaningful ways to support them that keep the door to help open.