

Tips to Help the Individual You Support Defend Themselves

This tip sheet of how to defend yourself can be provided to direct support professionals (DSPs) to review with the individuals they support.

Danger Signs that You Might Be Harmed or Hurt

- Someone grabs, holds, pushes, slaps or hits you.
- Someone touches or kisses you without you saying it's okay.
- Someone yells, puts you down, or says hurtful things to you.



Things that Help

- **Make eye contact** — Look the attacker directly in the eye to say you are not afraid!
- **Breathe** — Take a deep breath and calm yourself.
- **Focus** — Focus on what to do to get to safety.
- **Get help** — Call 911, report it to the police, talk to your supporters, and/or get help from an abuse prevention center. Keep seeking help until you are safe.



Defend Yourself

Protect yourself when someone tries to hurt you. Here are some ways to defend yourself:

- **Surprise your attacker** — Don't be quiet and let them hurt you. Surprise your attacker by making noise, saying "**NO**," and/or walking or running away.
 - **Remember, it's NOT OK for someone to hurt you.**
- **Give 100% effort** — When you defend yourself, do one thing at a time and do it with 100% of everything you have whether you yell or run away.
- **If all else fails, wait** — Let the situation progress, plan, and wait for a chance to get to safety.
- **As a last resort, defend yourself by physically fighting back** — Use your body "defenders" — your elbow, your heel, your fist, your voice, and your head. A wheelchair or a cane can also be used as a defender.



To get away quickly...

1. Aim for a place on the attacker's body that will hurt a lot.
2. Look for a place on the body you can reach.
3. Distract the attacker so you can get to safety.

Here are Some Ways You Can Use Your Body to Defend Yourself:

- Hit the attacker in the ribs (between their chest and belly) **with your elbow**.
- **Use your heel** to stomp on the attacker's foot.
- **Use your fist** to hit the attacker in the nose.
- **Use your knee** to hit the attacker in the groin.
- Use your heel to kick the attacker in the shin.
- If you have a wheelchair, **use your wheelchair** to run into the attacker's legs.



References:

- <https://www.purdue.edu/timely-warnings/safety-tips/aggravated-assault.html>
- <https://www.dds.ca.gov/services/dspt/year-1-2-trainer-and-student-resource-guides/>
- <http://www.calcasa.org/wp-content/uploads/files/angie-blumel-advocate-guide-safety-planning-final-printer.pdf>
- <https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/domestic-violence-disabilities-2/>