

THE FRIEND

FORCED MARRIAGE CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE AT ANYTIME, REGARDLESS OF THEIR GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR ETHNICITY. IT'S THEREFORE REALLY IMPORTANT THAT EVERYONE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE SIGNS OF FORCED MARRIAGE, SO THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND OUR FRIENDS



SIGNS OF FORCED MARRIAGE

- * DOMESTIC ABUSE
- * BROTHERS OR SISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN MARRIED WHEN THEY WERE REALLY YOUNG
- * HAS TO STAY HOME AND IS NOT ALLOWED TO SPEAK TO OTHER PEOPLE
- * NO (FINANCIAL) INDEPENDENCE
- * STOPS COMING TO SCHOOL
- * FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS CONSTANTLY CHECK UP ON THEM
- * POOR GRADES
- * DECLINE IN BEHAVIOUR
- * SEEMS WORRIED, DOWN, NOT INTERESTED IN ANYTHING
- * DOES NOT REALLY WANT TO TALK
- * GOING MISSING
- * DISAPPEARS FROM OR DOESN'T UPDATE SOCIAL MEDIA



HELP AND SUPPORT

IT CAN BE SCARY IF A FRIEND FINDS THEMSELVES IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S THEIR FAMILY WHO IS CAUSING THEM DISTRESS. UNDERSTANDIBLY, YOU WILL WANT TO HELP YOUR FRIEND, BUT IT'S ALSO REALLY IMPORTANT THAT YOU KEEP YOURSELF SAFE, TOO. THAT'S WHY WE'VE PUT TOGETHER THIS LIST OF ADVICE FOR HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO IS AT RISK OF FORCED MARRIAGE. WE'VE ALSO DIVIDED IT INTO THREE SECTIONS. THE FIRST IS THE SIMPLEST AND MOST ACCESSIBLE, THE SECOND IS IF YOU ARE ABLE TO OFFER A BIT MORE HELP, AND THE THIRD IS IF YOUR FRIEND MIGHT BE IN IMMEDIATE TROUBLE. WE KNOW THAT IT CAN BE OVERWHELMING, BUT WE WANT TO GIVE YOU LOTS OF CHOICES SO THAT YOU'RE EMPOWERED TO MAKE THE BEST DECISION FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR FRIEND.



FIRST SECTION : ACCESSIBLE

- * ASK YOUR FRIEND IF THEY'RE FEELING OK, OR IF THERE'S ANYTHING WORRYING THEM AT THE MOMENT
- * IF YOUR FRIEND IS WORRIED, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY
- * LISTEN CAREFULLY AND ALLOW THEM TO SPEAK FREELY
- * REASSURE THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, SAY: "IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT"
- * DO NOT QUIZ THEM
- * DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS OR JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS
- * ASK THEM WHAT THEY WANT TO DO NEXT AND WHO THEY WANT TO ASK FOR HELP, FOR EXAMPLE, A TEACHER OR ANOTHER ADULT THEY TRUST, OR KARMA NIRVANA (0800 5999 247), SAVERA UK (0800 107 0726), OR THE POLICE.
- * DON'T SPEAK TO THEIR FAMILY OR COMMUNITY, THOUGH.



SECOND SECTION : MEDIUM

- * AGREE TO A SECRET CODE SO THAT YOU KNOW IT'S YOUR FRIEND MESSAGING AND NOT SOMEONE ELSE WHO USES THEIR PHONE AND SOCIAL MEDIA. FOR EXAMPLE, CHOOSE A SECRET NICKNAME OR A SPECIAL WAY TO SAY HI.
- * AGREE TO A SAFE WORD OR PHRASE THAT YOUR FRIEND WILL USE IF THEY NEED HELP, BUT THAT WILL SOUND NORMAL IF THEY'RE OVERHEARD. FOR EXAMPLE, "WHAT'S UP WITH AGGIE?". YOU MIGHT ALSO CHOOSE AN IMAGE THEY COULD SHARE TO THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA THAT WOULD ACT AS A SIGNAL FOR HELP.
- * TELL YOUR FRIEND TO KEEP THEIR PHONE CHARGED AT ALL TIMES IN CASE THEY NEED TO CALL FOR HELP.
- * SUGGEST THAT YOUR FRIEND SWITCHES OFF THEIR MOBILE PHONE LOCATION SETTINGS AND THE "FIND MY PHONE" FEATURE.
- * SUGGEST YOUR FRIEND CHANGE THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA PASSWORDS

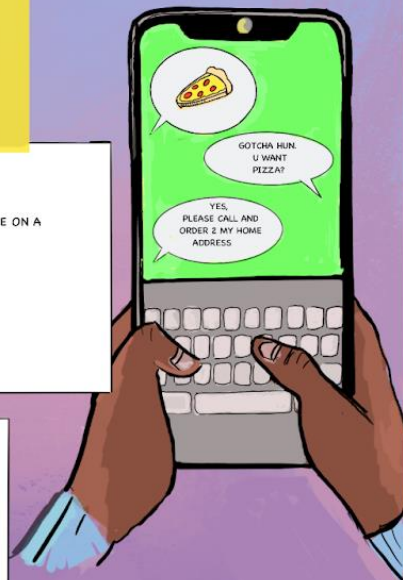


THIRD SECTION : IF YOUR FRIEND IS IN IMMEDIATE TROUBLE

- * ALWAYS ASK AN ADULT FOR HELP.
- * THIS ADVICE IS ESPECIALLY RELEVANT IF YOUR FRIEND'S FAMILY IS PLANNING A HOLIDAY ABROAD.
- * FIND OUT THE DATE THEY'RE SCHEDULED TO RETURN HOME. IF THEY'RE NOT BACK BY THIS DATE, AGREE ON A PERSON YOU COULD TELL (A TEACHER, YOUR PARENTS, OR THE POLICE)
- * TRY TO GET THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF WHERE YOUR FRIEND WILL BE STAYING.
- * TRY TO MAKE A COPY OF THEIR PASSPORT NUMBER, OR TAKE A CLEAR PHOTO OF THEIR PASSPORT.
- * TAKE A PICTURE OF YOUR FRIEND WITH YOUR PHONE
- * ASK THEM TO MEMORISE YOUR PHONE NUMBER, AS WELL AS THE PHONE NUMBER OF THE FORCED MARRIAGE UNIT (0044(0) 20 7008 0151)



WE KNOW IT CAN BE A REALLY SCARY SITUATION, FOR YOU AS WELL AS YOUR FRIEND. THAT'S WHY WE WANT TO REASSURE YOU THAT ANY HELP YOU CAN OFFER IS VALUABLE AND WORTH WHILE, EVEN IF IT FEELS AS SIMPLE AS ASKING YOUR FRIEND IF THEY'RE OK, AND THEN FINDING SOMEONE WHO CAN HELP THEM.



Let's talk about The Friend: Discussion questions and key points

The Friend is aimed at students who might not consider themselves at risk of forced marriage or forced marriage to be an issue that is relevant to them. It highlights signs of forced marriage that friends could spot and ways in which friends could intervene.

1. Could you spot any signs of forced marriage? What else could they be signs for?

The question invites students to reflect on how they relate to the people around them, whether they pay close attention, look out for others, and know when something is up. The signs highlighted in the comic are just some of the signs of forced marriage. They could also be signs for other forms of domestic or 'honour'-based abuse; overprotective parenting; parental concern for children's safety; financial difficulties; academic struggles; mental health issues; shyness; introversion; personal preferences for privacy; or a desire for digital detoxification.

2. What else could you do to support someone at risk of or already experiencing forced marriage?

The comic only suggests some possible interventions. Generally, it is important to be empathetic and respect an individual's boundaries. Offer non-judgmental support and reassurance. Offer a safe space for the person to share their feelings, fears, and concerns. Listen, respect their decisions, and provide assistance without imposing your own beliefs or choices. Validate their emotions and provide empathy and understanding. Help them recognise that they are not alone and that their experiences are not their fault. Help them understand that forced marriage is a violation of their human rights and that there are resources available to assist them. Share information about organisations specialising in forced marriage cases such as the Forced Marriage Unit, Karma Nirvana and Savera UK. Encourage the individual to seek professional assistance from these organisations. They can provide guidance, legal support, counselling, and protection measures. Respect the person's autonomy in deciding when and how to seek help, but emphasise the importance of reaching out to professionals who are equipped to handle forced marriage situations. In the meantime, you might want to work together to identify a safe place to go, to establish safe communication methods, and to create a support network. It is crucial however to respect the person's need for confidentiality and privacy. Share information only with their consent, and be mindful of the potential risks they may face if their situation is exposed to the wrong individuals.