

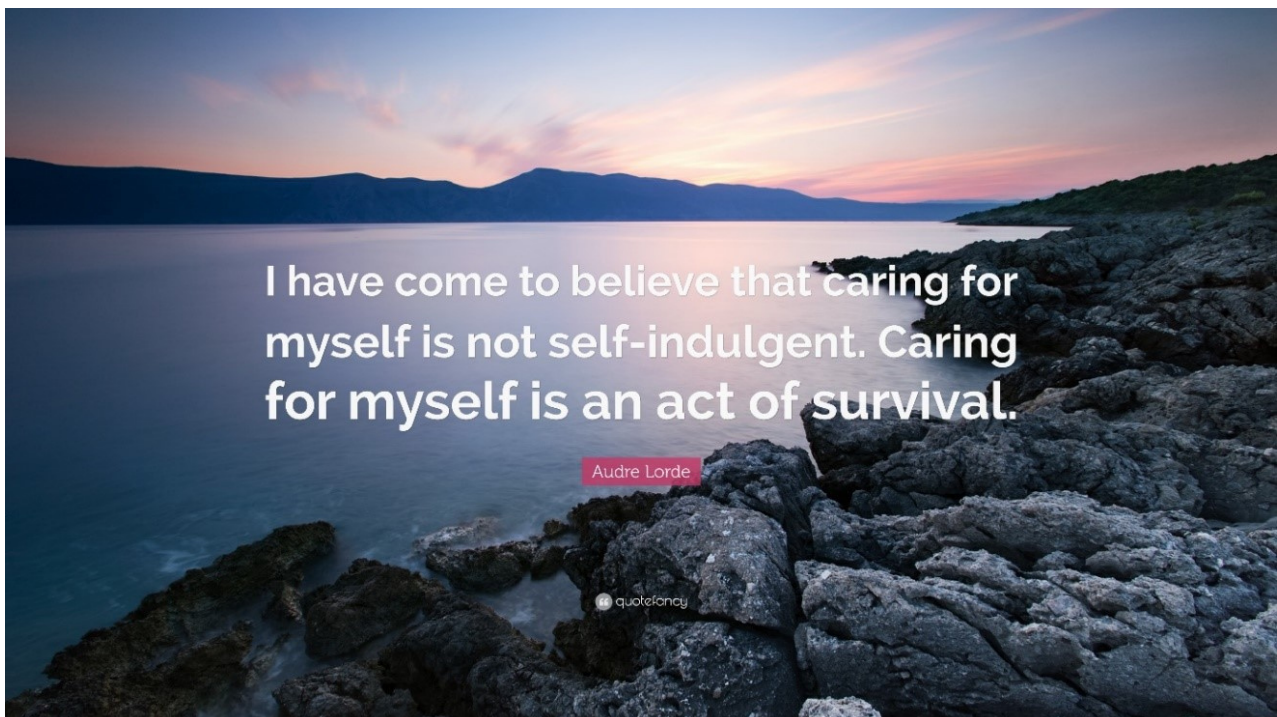
Module 1 – Introduction to Ask Me

Welcome to module 1. At the end of this module we hope that you will be able to:

- Identify some self-care strategies and understand why self-care is important
- Explain the value of an effective community response to abuse
- Recognise the impact of the language we use when talking about abuse
- Explain the role of Ask Me and the importance of creating opportunities to discuss abuse

Sometimes when people learn more about abuse they realise they are experiencing abuse now, or have done in the past. They may also become worried about someone else. This is not uncommon and help is available. For confidential information and advice, please contact our 24 hour **Live Fear Free** helpline on **0808 80 10 800**.

Self-care



Llinell Gymorth Live Fear
Byw Heb Ofn Free Helpline

0808 80 10 800

ffôn • tecst • sgwrsio byw • eboost
call • text • live chat • email



Cymorth i Ferched Cymru
Welsh Women's Aid

Rhoi Merched a Phlant yn Gyntaf
Putting Women & Children First

The aim of Ask Me is to make it easier for communities to talk about abuse by creating spaces and opportunities that feel safe to do so. Abuse is very common and many of us may have experienced abuse or be close to people who have. Talking about abuse can be difficult for everyone, regardless of our own experiences. To do this effectively we need to prioritise our own wellbeing and ensure we regularly engage in some self-care.

Self-care means to intentionally do something to look after our mental and physical health and wellbeing. Although most of us will already do some basic things to look after ourselves physically (e.g brushing our teeth), looking after our emotional wellbeing is not usually a skill we are taught or that is valued.

One thing you might want to consider is how much you want to share with other people on the training course. **We will never ask anyone to share their experience of abuse** but you are welcome to do so if it feels safe, relevant, will help others understanding, and beneficial for the group. We also ask that you consider how what you share might impact on other people. Please bear in mind that this is a training course not a therapeutic or support group, and the facilitators will need to balance the needs of all attendees. That might mean moving conversations on to cover course content.

We've been thoughtful about the resources and discussions we have chosen however the nature of the subject means that any part of the training could bring up a variety of emotions. This could include resources that discuss violence and abuse, homicide, suicide, mental health and impacts of abuse on children.

Please do whatever you need to do to feel safe during this course. You know yourself and what you need best. This might include not reading part of the pre-reading because you found it challenging; taking a time out during a Zoom workshop or opting out of an activity.

Sometimes people worry that if they decide to opt out of something, this means they can't become a Community Ambassador. In fact, we are keen to see that you understand your own boundaries. If we feel that someone has struggled with large parts of the training, we may check in with them to see if becoming a Community Ambassador is right for them at this point.

Of course, we hope that you will practice self-care in your everyday life and not just as on the training. To help with this, we've included some links below to some self-care resources which include techniques and tips you might want to try out.

Please note, if this document opens in your internet browser, when following the



links below you can either copy and paste the URLs into a new tab or on some browsers, you can right click the blue highlighted text and opt to “open link in new tab” to make it easier to view the resources.

OPTIONAL: Read or watch **one or more** of the following resources on self-care:



WATCH – This short video discusses how and why you might make a self-care action plan (5 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w0iVTQS8ftg>



READ – This is a wellbeing and Self Care Guide by Galop, a specialist LGBT+ organisation (6 minutes)
<http://www.galop.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wellbeing-And-Self-Care.pdf>

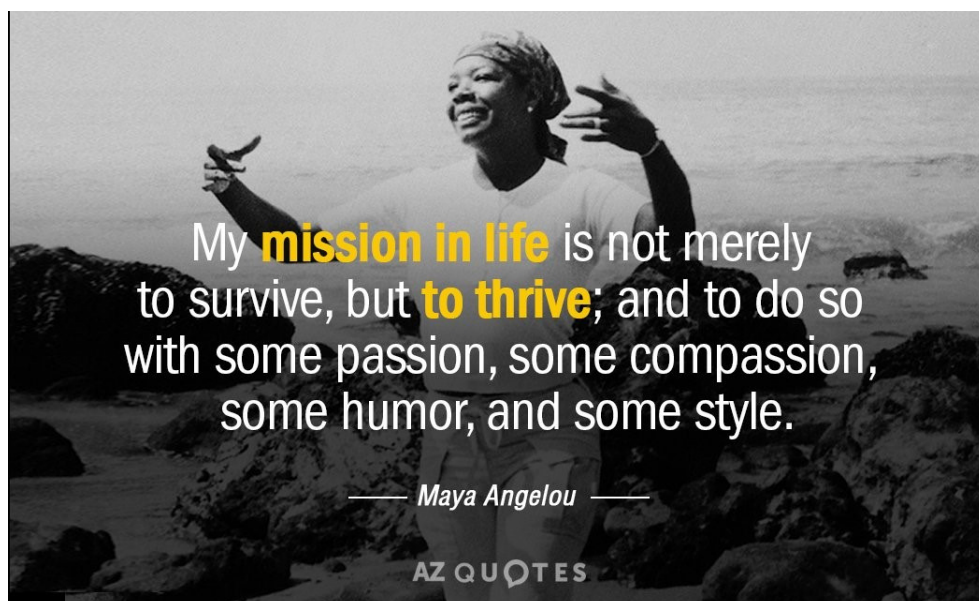
READ – This short article has 50 Self Care ideas you can do for free at home (5 minutes)
<https://www.purewow.com/wellness/free-ways-to-practice-self-care>

Activity

1

(10 mins)

1. Make a list of your favourite self-care activities
2. Consider the reasons why self-care is important
3. Identify any additional self-care strategies you may want to put in place whilst on this training course



Language

The language we use when talking about abuse is important. By being intentional and thoughtful about the words we use, we can do a better job of communicating what we mean but also avoid inadvertently reinforcing unhelpful myths or stereotypes.

We will try to avoid jargon or acronyms during this course. If we use a word that we think not everyone will understand, we will use a [hyperlink](#) like this, that you can click on for a better description. There are however some common terms we will use throughout the training.

We will talk about **violence against women** and girls to describe crimes that happen to women because they are women and/or disproportionately affect women. We will look at this more closely in the next module. Sometimes, for brevity we'll use the term abuse to refer to violence against women and girls.

We talk about **domestic abuse** rather than domestic violence. This is because abuse isn't just physical and behaviours such as controlling someone or restricting access to their money are often forms of abuse survivors experience and can be just as harmful.

Where it comes up, we will talk about **image based abuse** instead of "[revenge porn](#)". This is because the word revenge implies that the survivor has done something wrong, when they often haven't. Secondly, because it was shared without someone's consent, it isn't porn.

We talk about **survivors** rather than **victims**. Many people tell us they find survivor a more empowering term and a better description of their whole journey. However not everyone feels this way so we ask that you be led by the person you are talking to.

When talking about someone who uses abuse, we use the word **perpetrators**. We don't usually use the word **offenders** because many perpetrators do not come into contact with the police.

In a similar vein, you might notice that we will talk about an **abusive partner** rather than an abusive relationship. This is to make it clear that we are talking about one person's choice to use abuse and avoid implying that something in the relationship or the survivor is to blame.

When we talk about receiving a **disclosure** all we mean is that someone has told you about abuse they have or are experiencing.



We will ask that you **signpost** people to support. What we mean by this is that you let them know what organisations are available to them and give them the contact details so that they can contact them directly.

We acknowledge **anyone of any gender, sex or sexuality can experience abuse**. However, at times we will use “she” when talking about a survivor and “he” when talking about a perpetrator. This is intentional to reflect the fact that abuse **overwhelmingly impacts on women and is perpetrated by men**.

However this is not meant to imply that this is always the case and the gender of the survivor or the perpetrator should not impact how you respond to someone experiencing abuse. **We also view abuse as a gendered issue, which we will come back to throughout the training.**

Community responses

We know that communities are often the first to know about abuse, however, the ways that we respond as communities aren't always helpful. In our communities we intentionally or inadvertently uphold myths and stereotypes that allow abuse to continue and mean many survivors have felt unable to reach out. Many survivors have to seek help multiple times before getting a supportive response. Survivors talk about experiencing disbelief and denial, and are frequently blamed for their experiences. This has led to many feeling let down by the response of their community.

Unsupportive responses act as ‘gate-closers’. This means instead of helping a survivor access more help and support, they prevent survivors from reaching out again as they may be afraid of receiving another unhelpful response.

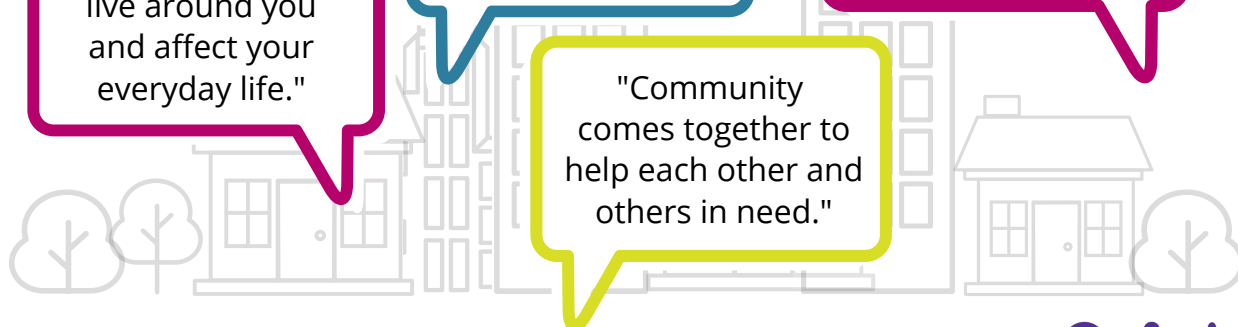
What does **community** mean?

"The people that live around you and affect your everyday life."

"A group of people who all have something in common."

"Community is being a part of something bigger than yourself."

"Community comes together to help each other and others in need."



We want communities to act as 'gate openers' rather than gate closers. By this we mean we want communities to actively break the silence in their communities, and take the burden away from the survivor to have to, so that seeking help becomes normal and communities understand the difficulties survivors face.

We want the first time a woman talks about abuse to be an opportunity to take her first step to safety.

That's why you're here.

Activity 2

(20 mins)

1. What different communities do you belong to? Where are the spaces you go and who are the people around you? – Consider where you work, study, socialise and any other communities you may be a part of, including online spaces. **Take 5 minutes to note down what communities or spaces you belong to. For example, friendship groups, places of worship, family groups, people you see in connection to children or spaces in connection to hobbies would all fit here.**
2. Consider the different responses your communities might give to survivors of abuse. For example, can you think of ways your communities may have been helpful to survivors of abuse? Can you think of ways your community might blame survivors and excuse perpetrators of abuse, or respond in other unhelpful ways?
3. What are the reasons individuals and communities might not always give a supportive response to survivors of abuse?

About Ask Me

Ambassadors are not on their own. They are part of something really amazing – a new movement for change. Ask Me was developed by Women's Aid Federation England and Welsh Women's Aid. It is part of a bigger model called "Change That Lasts" which aims to provide a joined up approach to abuse by improving how communities, professionals and services respond to abuse and survivors. If you'd like to learn more about Change That Lasts, please visit

<https://www.welshwomensaid.org.uk/what-we-do/change-that-lasts/> for information.

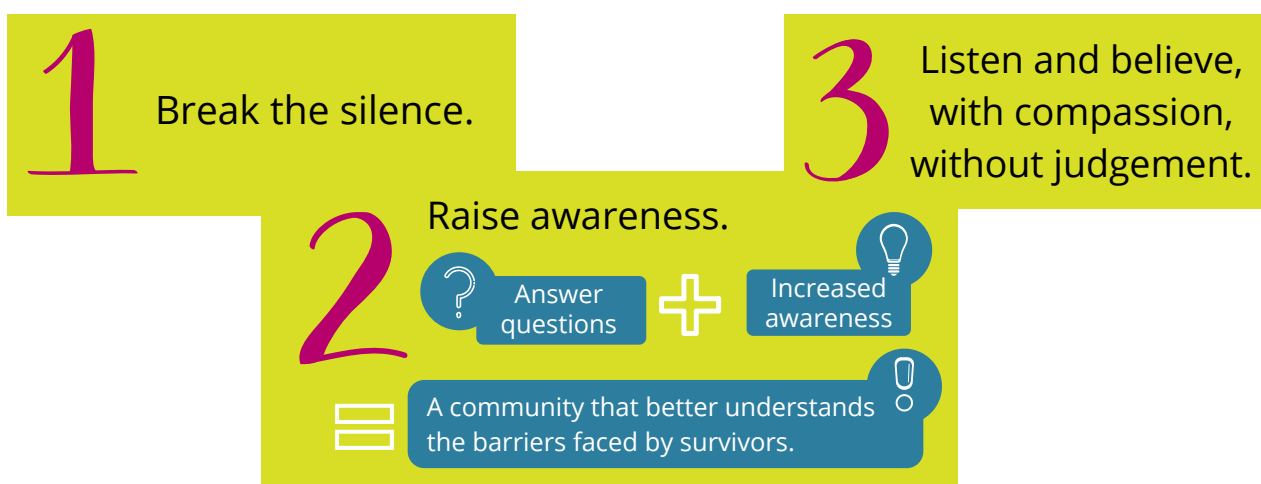
Ask Me aims to create communities who feel confident and empowered to break the



silence and raise awareness about violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. We also want communities to know how to give a good response to any survivors that come forward.

The Ask Me scheme

This project aims to **break the silence around violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence** within the community and **remove the barriers** that make it hard for survivors to tell others about their experiences.



A good community response can be broken down into 3 steps. Firstly, a good community response is one that creates opportunities to talk about abuse by breaking the silence around abuse.

A good community response is also one that increases the knowledge and understanding about abuse held in our communities. We can do this by sharing resources, answering questions and directing people to places where they can raise their own awareness.

Finally, when we talk about abuse, people may choose to share their own experiences of abuse with us. A good response to this is listening, believing, being compassionate, with holding judgement and signposting the survivor to options for further support.

What survivors want from a response

The below quote comes from Mandy, who is an ambassador for our sister organisation in England.



"For many women, when you first try and tell someone you are experiencing domestic abuse, no one listens to you. The person you are telling might not recognise what you are experiencing is abuse or know how to ask the right questions.

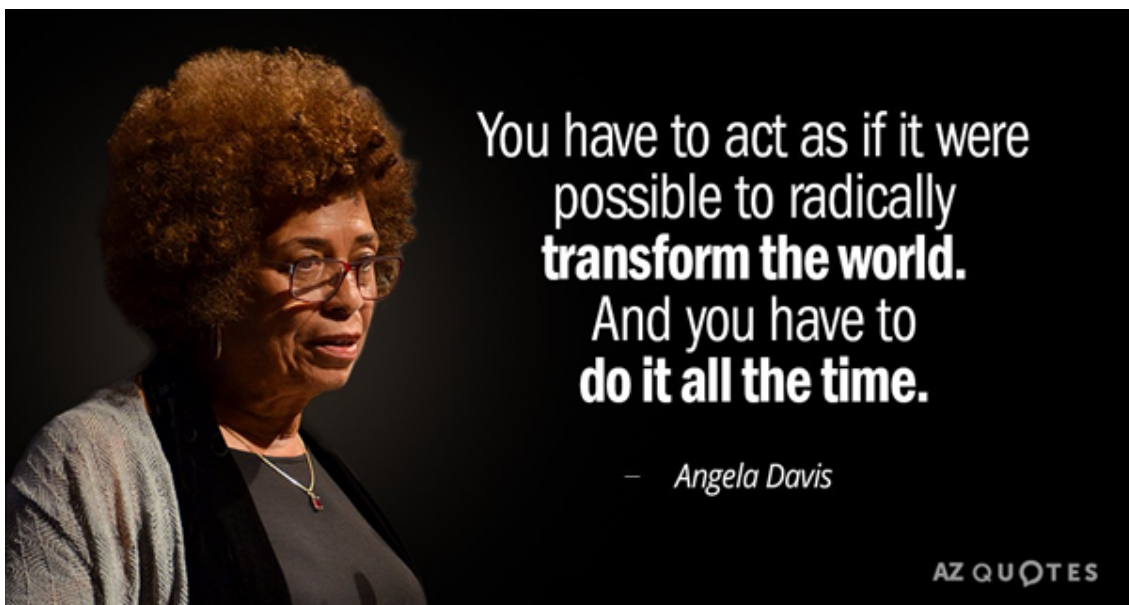
They might not know how to offer the support you need, or know where to refer you for help. And when somebody, finally, does listen, and everyone jumps into action, your voice can get lost again."

Activity 3

(10 mins)

Consider Mandy's experience.

1. What things does Mandy want from a response? Can you list them?
2. What doesn't Mandy want from a response?
3. If Mandy's communities talked about abuse and had a good understanding, how might her experiences have been different?





Space for reflection:

(20 mins)

Prior to each Zoom workshop, we will be providing a number of questions we would like you to reflect on. Feel free to write down answers to these questions, make notes, make audio notes brainstorm or mind map them, journal, discuss them with a friend or create a piece of writing or art. Feel free to be as creative as you like. Don't worry you won't be made to show anyone else what you have done! The important thing is that you spend some time reflecting on these questions and gathering your thoughts so you can fully participate in the next Zoom call.

1. What do you hope to achieve from attending Ask Me?
2. What things do you need from the group and the facilitator to help you feel safe and comfortable to participate in the workshops? What do you need from yourself to help you contribute whilst managing your wellbeing?
3. Why do you think talking about abuse is important?
4. How can you create opportunities to talk about abuse in your communities?

Optional resources

We recognise that we will all move through the content at different speeds and some people might wish to explore the module topic more deeply. Therefore at the end of each module we will share a short list of resources around what is discussed in each module. **There is no pressure or expectation on anyone to look at the optional resources** before the Zoom call, they are an optional extra for who wishes to do so.

READ - This summary discusses how communities are important for a survivor wanting to leave an abusive partner (9 minutes)

https://www.solacewomensaid.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/Solace%20Womens%20Aid%20briefing_Community_09.2014.pdf



READ - This article is a glossary of terms around gender and sexuality that may be useful if you're unsure about what some terms we use mean

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms>

READ - This article talks about why self-care can be a feminist act (18 minutes)

<https://www.bustle.com/articles/200074-why-self-care-is-an-important-feminist-act>



WATCH - This short video talks about what is meant by rape culture and why it stops us from ending sexual assault (5 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLTN558ewqo>