

the center for anti-violence education's definition of self-defense

Self-defense is everything we do to make ourselves as safe as possible. We may use one or many of the following strategies to keep ourselves and our communities safer:

- prevention and avoidance strategies
- setting boundaries
- using our voices
- getting away
- using physical techniques
- going along with an attacker when necessary
- getting support
- engaging in activities to support our healing and recovery
- building our communities
- working together for social change

Some important definitions:

SETTING BOUNDARIES

We use the term “boundaries” to express interpersonal limits. Boundaries also include setting physical and emotional comfort zones. It is our right to set boundaries that help us feel safe, and to change them whenever we need to, depending on whom we’re with, where we are, how we feel, and/or the changing situation.

Being aware of our boundaries can help us to say “yes” or “no,” or otherwise express our needs in any given situation. It can also help us to be clear with others when we do change our minds.

GOING ALONG WITH AN ABUSER / ATTACKER

Sometimes we may feel that we have to do what an abuser or attacker says. We may not have other options or alternatives. Self-defense includes everything we do to survive or to feel safer in the moment. Cooperation or submission is *not* consent. This means that even if you go along with an attacker, as a strategy to better protect others, or for your own survival or feeling of safety, it does not mean that you agreed.

We may look back on a situation and see that there are self-defense strategies we didn’t use, but this does not mean that we are to blame for violence committed by others.

GETTING SUPPORT

Getting support can take many forms, including communicating with others and thinking about things on our own. We may draw support from talking to others about our experiences, getting involved in our communities, or supporting others as they respond to and heal from their experiences. We may find that speaking with counselors or other service providers is a good way to work towards our healing and recovery, or we may find that we prefer to speak to people who are close to us.

There are many LGBTQ organizations that offer support services for those of us who have experienced violence. Please see the Getting Help section of our website for more information.
www.safeandproud.org