

# Validating

When asking patients about domestic violence, dental hygienists need to acknowledge that domestic violence is wrong. They need to also confirm their patients' worth. Clear validating messages include compassionate statements that take the blame off the victim:

- **“You didn’t cause this; it isn’t your fault.”**
- **“You do not deserve to be hit or hurt, no matter what happened.”**
- **“I am concerned about your safety and well-being.”**

Dental hygienist’s should periodically revisit the topic of domestic violence, expressing concern for the patient’s health and safety and offering hope for the future.

Validation does not depend on direct disclosure by the patient. Survivors report that validation helps them even when they have not directly disclosed the abuse and the health care professional has not directly identified the abuse.

One survivor reported that she and her health care professional danced around the issue of abuse, but that the health care professional still provided validation by being nonjudgmental and caring: