



The Friendship Center

NEWSLETTER / FALL 2022



Relationship GREEN FLAGS

by *Jaime Gabrielli*,
Direct Service Advocate

NEW RELATIONSHIPS are exciting. There is so much to learn about each other. It can also be a tricky time as you figure out your compatibility.

We often talk with clients about “red flags,” or warning signs of unhealthy relationships. Understanding and recognizing early warning signs can empower us to avoid abusive partners and help us choose healthier relationships. But sometimes abusive behavior doesn’t appear until later in the relationship.

We also use “green flags” to highlight positive actions and traits in intimate partners. Green flags are usually promising signs someone understands healthy behaviors.

Each of us is unique and every relationship is different. Our emotions and needs fluctuate depending on a variety of things like if we feel fulfilled in our life and if we are getting our basic needs met. We also have different values and priorities. For some people, consistent communication is necessary, while others are okay with sporadic communication. Ultimately, a relationship is healthy when both you and your partner feel you are equal, and the connection meets both of your needs. Here are some relationship **green flags** that will help you identify whether a new person is a worthwhile investment of your time, energy, and attention:

➤ **COMMUNICATION.** You talk openly about problems and **listen** to one another. You can safely express perspectives, needs, and feelings. Your partner is accepting and validating, even when they don’t agree with what you are saying.

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THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER IS THE ONLY DVSA AGENCY IN LEWIS AND CLARK, JEFFERSON, & BROADWATER COUNTIES.



Our mission is to be a safe haven for those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking and to empower our community to flourish in relationships free from violence.

Open to the Public: Monday – Thursday 9AM – 5PM / Friday 9AM – 4PM / **Location:** 1430 Sanders, Helena, MT 59601
24-Hour Hotline: 406-442-6800 / **Email:** officem@thefriendshipcenter.org / **web:** www.thefriendshipcenter.org / **Fax:** 406.430.0114

ADAPTING TO THE NEXT CHAPTER

A letter from our Executive Director,

Gina Boesdorfer



We work with a broad array of community partners who are as passionate as we are about a safe future for our community and who are coordinating efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

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MANY ASPECTS OF my job continue to keep me inspired. One of the biggest motivators for stepping into my role as the executive director at The Friendship Center is the ability to impact the complicated layering of systems our clients are expected to navigate.

I spent over a decade helping clients figure out who they needed to call, fill out applications, be thwarted by a lack of childcare or transportation, apply for childcare assistance, meet different and nuanced expectations by various agencies, look for work, maintain work while meeting all of their other needs/requirements, find uniforms, gather school supplies, find therapists, find therapists for their children, get food, coordinate supervised visitations, communicate with attorneys, provide support during court, find housing, apply for housing, coordinate financial aid or double deposits and first month rent, document stalking and safety concerns, report violence, apply for crime victims compensation, work on budgets, get phones replaced, reset all logins associated with a compromised email...

I am sure that lengthy list was exhausting to read. Although it has been a couple of years since I helped clients at that level, I can still acutely feel the physical and mental exhaustion and frustration of what felt like constantly moving targets, changing expectations, and circular processes. It was discouraging for me. It was often retraumatizing and paralyzing for the clients I served.

As you will see on page 5, our clients often have a vast web of personal and community hurdles to overcome as they also work to heal from the violence and trauma they have experienced. We are in a place where only addressing the crime that was committed against our clients is not enough. Many of our clients must interact with the justice system, experience mental health challenges, struggle with substance use, can't find housing, employment, or childcare, and have to navigate a complicated social services structure, as well.

My inspiration comes from our values and our vision; in working to create a future in which everyone is thriving in safe and healthy relationships. Although it is still frustrating and discouraging at times, it also is filled with hope and opportunities for change. We are not alone in our efforts to address these issues in our community. We work with a broad array of community partners who are as passionate as we are about a safe future for our community and who are coordinating efforts to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

Collectively, we can ensure our community is doing its part to cultivate safe and healthy futures for all who live here.

Gina



THE WORK OF THE FRIENDSHIP CENTER IS:

Person-centered. We seek to understand and meet the unique needs of each client.

Data-driven. We focus on evidence-based practices that are proven to be effective.

Trauma-informed. We acknowledge the complex and pervasive effects of trauma and commit to provide services that promote healing and recovery, without re-traumatization.

OUR CORE VALUES ARE:

Empowerment. We champion our clients as they reclaim agency over their lives and choices.

Dignity and Respect. We uphold the inherent value and worth of all clients, staff and partners.

Integrity. We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards. We stand by our word and honor our commitments.

Confidentiality. We honor the stories entrusted to us and strictly protect client privacy.

Compassion. We bravely receive the difficult truths clients share and respond with loving kindness.

Collaboration. We provide team-based support to clients internally and proactively partner with others in our community to meet the complex needs of those in our care.

Effective communication. We commit to listening well and speaking clearly, acknowledging that communication requires ongoing effort and follow-up.

EMPOWERED TO RECLAIM MY LIFE

Client Impact Story: Sarah

I DIDN'T KNOW what to do or where to go. I was being harassed, followed, called constantly. This person just wouldn't leave me alone. I would be followed everywhere I drove. I was called hundreds of times a day. They used different phone numbers and restricted numbers. They followed me in different vehicles. They even had people I didn't know calling me and following me everywhere I went for them.

Finally, I confided in a family advocate at my child's school, and it was suggested that I try meeting with someone at The Friendship Center. As scared as I was, I had to try *something*. I met with an advocate at The Friendship Center and explained all the events that had been happening. And that is the day I learned that I was being stalked. And that it was serious, it was not okay, and it was not my fault.

Every time I had an appointment, I felt welcome, important, and never a burden. I didn't have to explain my situation multiple times to multiple people. They remembered me and my situation. They were also mindful when my child was around. Their discretion was second nature and allowed one less worry on my mind.


The Friendship Center stood right by my side (and a few times I swear they even carried me) until my stalker was finally arrested *after nearly four months*. They checked in with me every day just to make sure I was doing okay. They were my guardian angels. The Friendship Center helped walk

me through every step of the process in the *criminal* justice system. They were a liaison between me and the County Attorney's office that was prosecuting the case for an entire year until the trial. They attended all the meetings with me. They helped me understand what was going on and what to expect. They attended court with me when I had to face my stalker. They helped me remember to breathe when I went into a panic. They were right there with me at the sentencing. They never once faltered. They were always just a phone call away, and sometimes they'd beat me to the call, almost as if they knew when I'd need them.

There is no amount of money I could ever give that would repay what The Friendship Center has given me. They were there for me at times when I didn't know where else to go, who else to talk to, when I didn't know who I could even trust.

I didn't just make it out alive. They were still there in the aftermath, inspiring me to thrive. They became like an extension of my family. And today I stand taller, and I stand prouder. I know how to keep myself and my family safe. I know that no matter what life throws at me, I'll always have somewhere I know I can trust.

Because of The Friendship Center and their extraordinary staff, I made it through to the other side. They empowered me to stand on my own and reclaim my life. They saved me in every sense of the term. I went from being a victim to being a survivor. They made all the difference. 🙏



“The Friendship Center stood right by my side (and a few times I swear they even carried me) ...”

WEB OF TRAUMA

Our clients are impacted by the complicated layering of systems represented in the web below while navigating the abuse and trauma they experienced.

This graphic is not comprehensive but is meant to highlight the broad web that our clients have to navigate.



Credit: This graphic is modified based on Mary Harvey's "Ecological View of Trauma."

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▶ **TRUST.** Your partner believes what you say and doesn't feel the need to "prove" or "test" your credibility. You feel safe being vulnerable and open with them, as well.

▶ **HONESTY.** They are transparent and truthful while respecting privacy. Your partner does not pressure you to reveal information you are not ready to share and honors your boundaries.

▶ **RESPECT.** Your partner values your opinions, rights, beliefs, and needs. You both have equal freedom to be who you are and pursue individual goals.

▶ **EQUALITY.** You make decisions together and have an equal say about major decisions within the relationship. Both partners have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

▶ **BOUNDARIES.** You enjoy spending time together, apart, alone, and with others. You respect each other's privacy and

personal space. Partners openly communicate what they are and aren't comfortable with in the relationship and honor each other's requests.

▶ **CONSENT.** You can talk openly about physical, sexual, and reproductive choices together. Both people always willingly consent to sexual activity and can safely express needs and boundaries.


▶ **EMPATHY.** Your partner understands basic kindness and genuinely values your experiences, perceptions, and points of view. Healthy partners care about your feelings, even when they get upset. They avoid name-calling, personal attacks, and belittling.

▶ **ACCOUNTABILITY.** They apologize, admit shortcomings, and take responsibility for their mistakes. Likewise, the capacity of both partners to accept an apology and move past conflict allows for building trust, better communication, and individual growth.

▶ **RELIABILITY.** Your partner shows up when they say they will and follows through on commitments. You can count on each other for help and support when you need it.

▶ **YOU ARE A PRIORITY.** While all partnerships require different amounts of personal time, what's most important is *you feel valued and seen*. If you feel ignored or pushed aside, this could be an indication your partner doesn't have enough time for you or might not share the same desire for time together.

At The Friendship Center, we believe *everyone has the right to flourish in healthy relationships* free from violence and abuse. While none of us are perfect partners and no one can predict the future, green flags are encouraging indications someone has the capacity and skills necessary to participate in healthy relationships.

You can learn more about healthy relationships and warning signs of abuse at www.loveisrespect.org. 

ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP GREEN FLAGS

 Self-Responsibility

 Supports Your Personal Growth

 Self-Reflective

 Long-Standing Friendships

 Honors Boundaries

 Spirituality

 Vulnerability

 Healthy Hobbies

 Communicates Openly

 Self Sufficiency

 Empathy

 Practices Self-Care



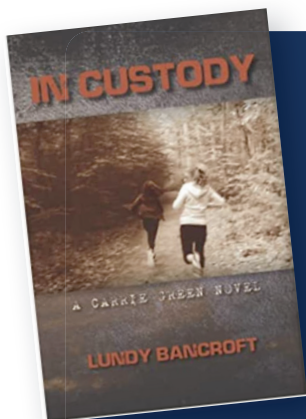
FRIENDSHIP CENTER SOLAR PANELS GO LIVE

AN ARRAY OF 100 SOLAR PANELS on The Friendship Center is producing electricity. Over the 30-year anticipated lifespan of the panels, The Friendship Center will be able to redirect approximately \$120,000 to \$150,000 otherwise spent on electricity costs to provide services to those experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

The Friendship Center received funding through the NorthWestern Energy Efficiency Plus (E+) Renewable Energy Program. The program is established with Universal System Benefits Program funds collected from all NorthWestern electric customers in the State of Montana.

“The solar panels will essentially generate revenue over the next 30 years by offsetting electricity costs that normally are paid for through our general operating fund,” said Friendship Center Executive Director Gina Boesdorfer. “This is a win-win-win for our clients, our community, and our earth.”

To see real time data and solar production trends for the panels, visit <https://tinyurl.com/TFCSolar>.



RECOMMENDED READING

IN CUSTODY: A CARRIE GREEN NOVEL **BY LUNDY BANCROFT**

Author Lundy Bancroft has spent his career as an author, workshop leader and consultant on domestic abuse. “In Custody: A Carrie Green Novel” is his first work of fiction. This book illuminates the brokenness of the child custody system in the US as it takes its readers on a suspenseful and powerful story of a mother doing everything she can to protect her child.

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sexual violence in our community

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BECOME A VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE

Offer support and crisis intervention to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

We operate a 24/7 crisis line to support those impacted by DVSA. Our crisis line volunteers are one of our most important resources. We provide 40 volunteer training hours plus additional staff support to ensure you are comfortable taking your shifts. Join us as we work to empower our community to flourish in relationships free from violence.

UPCOMING CRISIS LINE TRAINING

Sat | 10.29.22 | 8:30am-5:30pm

Sun | 10.30.22 | 8:30am-5:30pm

Tues | 11.1.22 | 5:30-7:30 pm (online)

Thurs | 11.3.22 | 5:30-7:30 pm (online)

Sat | 11.5.22 | 8:30 am-5:30 pm

Sun | 11.6.22 | 8:30 am-5:30 pm

Tues | 11.8.22 | 5:30-7:30 pm (online)

Thurs | 11.10.22 | 5:30-7:30 pm (online)

Contact Sarah at (406) 442.6800 or
sarah.k@thefriendshipcenter.org for more
information and to sign up. 