

Supporting Survivors Sexual Assault - Relationship Violence - Stalking

Your response plays a critical role in supporting a survivor and connecting them to resources. You can use your voice to show you care when a survivor chooses to share their experiences with you.



“Thank you for trusting me.”

It takes courage for someone to share about their experience. Show appreciation for their decision to confide in you. Be mindful of your body language and allow them to set the pace of the conversation.



“I believe you.”

A survivor may experience self-doubt and self-blame. Avoid asking questions, let them know that you believe them and remind them that the assault was not their fault.



“I am here to support you.”

Remind the survivor that you care and are here to support them, but also be aware of your desire to provide reassurance and/or make guarantees about next steps. We don't want to promise things that are outside of our control.



“Let's talk to CARE at SARC.”

Offer resources to your friend and always let them make their own decisions. Remember to also seek support for yourself so you can continue to support the survivor.

Supporting Survivors: The Impact of Trauma

Every survivor responds uniquely to experiences of sexual assault, relationship violence and stalking. This means that the healing process is different for each individual. Reactions following a traumatic experience may be immediate or delayed. There are common reactions that are natural and sometimes unexpected.

The information below is not comprehensive but it is a good starting point in understanding the impact of trauma on survivors.



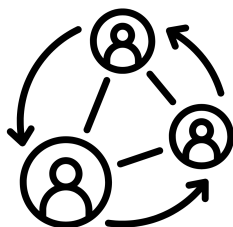
Possible Physical Effects

- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Fatigue, headaches, nightmares
- Pregnancy, STIs, substance use
- Physical injuries



Possible Emotional and Psychological Effects

- Fear, anxiety, flashbacks, helplessness
- Difficulty concentrating, embarrassment
- Hopelessness, shame, guilt, self-blame
- Depression, denial



Possible Social Effects

- Distancing from people/relationships
- Withdrawal from school involvement
- Loss of trust in others, fear of being alone
- Decline in academic/work performance
- Difficulty with intimacy

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center offers free and confidential support services. CARE at SARC staff are on-call 24 hours/day, on weekends and on holidays for safety planning and urgent support.

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