

Supporting an Adult Impacted by Sexual Violence

Listen

Listening without judgment can help people to feel safe, comfortable, and supported.

- Ensure that the person disclosing is able to set the tone and the pace of the conversation. Allow them time and space to share as much or as little as they want; silence is okay.
- Validate feelings; let the person know that they are entitled to their feelings, and that there is no wrong way to feel following an experience of sexual violence.
- Only ask questions that are needed to better support the person.
- Avoid asking questions that start with “why”.

Believe

Many people who experience sexual violence worry they will not be believed. Not being believed can have very damaging impacts on healing, making it so important to demonstrate that you believe the person through both your words and actions. The following statements often have a positive impact:

- "I believe you."
- "Thank you for telling me."
- "I'm sorry this happened to you."
- "This was not your fault."

Explore Options

Rather than telling the person what you think they should do following an experience of sexual violence, it is better to explore the options that are available to them. Providing options (rather than advice) is important as it allows the individual to decide what happens next on their healing journey. Some options include:

- Accessing counselling or other community support resources.
- Connecting with friends, family, or work for support.



Healing looks
different for
everyone

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Explore Options Continued

- Seeking medical attention. This may include care for injuries, pregnancy testing, STI testing, or accessing the services of SART Nurses.
- Reporting. There is no time limit to report sexual violence to the police.
- Doing nothing. There are many reasons that people who have experienced sexual violence choose not to report or seek assistance, and it is important to respect their choices.

Practice Self Care

Hearing a disclosure can be very upsetting, and for some it can be a trigger or reminder of their own experiences of harm. It is very important to take care of yourself when you are supporting someone who has experienced sexual violence.

- Reflect on your limits and respect these boundaries. The following questions can be helpful to consider: How will I know when I need to take a break? How will I know when I need to ask for help?
- If you would like to talk to someone about how to respond to a disclosure, or to receive support in your role as a supporter, call the SACE Support and Information Line at **780.423.4121**. For more options from 9 am – 9 pm, chat at **sace.ca**, or access text, toll free, or interpreter assisted language support at **1.866.403.8000**.

Other Resources

Sexual Assault
Response Team (SART)
**Access from any
emergency room in the
Edmonton Zone**

Edmonton Distress Line
780.482.4357 (24hr)

Birth Control Centre
780.735.0010

STI Clinic
780.342.2300

Woman's Health Options
780.484.1124
**womanshealth
options.com**