

Syracuse University

Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Resolution Services

How to support survivors

The support and concern of someone who cares can make a big difference to someone who is being **abused**.

Here are some suggestions for how to help individuals who are being abused:

Let them know you are concerned and why.

Listen to them.

Let them know that they are not alone.

Let them know that they deserve to be treated with respect.

Support their right to make their own choices and decisions. Avoid telling them what to do.

Talk with them in private and keep the conversation confidential.

Become informed and offer to provide information.

Offer to research information on resources and programs that could be helpful.

Let them know you are available to talk.

Help them to identify their personal strengths.

Stay focused on your friend /family member, their feelings, safety and options, and do not talk negatively about the abuser. Negative statements about the abuser could lead your friend or family member to feel the need to stand up for their partner and could shut down any further conversation.

IMPORTANT: Victims/survivors are never obligated to report and can do so in their own time if they do decide to.

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Recovery after a **sexual assault** is a long-term and individual process. There is no set period of time for recovery. It is important that survivors have control over this process and are able to take the lead in their recovery. Here are some guidelines for friends and family members of survivors of sexual assault:

Listen and offer support.

Let the survivor know that you believe them.

Validate their feelings.

Let them know that what happened was not their fault.

Respect their privacy.

Let them take the lead in discussing the assault.

Let them know you are available when they need you

Encourage the survivor to seek medical attention.

Respect whatever decisions they make.

Be patient. Recognize that recovery takes a long time.

Ask the survivor what they need.

If you wish to seek assistance for them, ask their permission to do so.

Remember that you do not need to have all the answers.

Make sure the focus of every discussion with the survivor does not revolve around the assault.

Recognize your feelings and seek support for yourself. The Sexual and Relationship Violence Response team is available for you. 315-443-8000

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