

## How to Support a Survivor

- Be a good listener. If you find yourself talking more than the survivor, you are probably not listening enough. Let the survivor talk about the incident, but don't force a discussion.

***“I don't want to pressure you to talk about this if you don't want to, and I want you to know that I'm here for you and ready to listen if you want to talk about what happened.”***

***“If you don't want to talk about it, that's fine. I just want you to know that I'm here for you if you need me.”***

- Believe what the survivor tells you. Talk, listen, respect and be emotionally available to the survivor. Accept the fact that the assault/abuse happened.

- Validate the survivor's feelings. Explain that what s/he is feeling and experiencing is completely normal and acceptable.

- Understand and tell the survivor that what happened is not the survivor's fault.

- Listen non-judgmentally. Ask the survivor what kind of support s/he wants and needs. Honor and respect these needs.

- Recognize and own your biases about sexual assault and rape. Be careful to leave your own judgments out of the conversation.

- Make sure the survivor is safe and physically well.

- Recognize that you cannot fix the survivor. Don't feel as if you need to have all the answers. Respect the fact that every survivor is an expert in his or her own healing process.

***“I don't really know what to say, but I'm your friend and I believe you and will support you in whatever decision you make.”***

- Suggest options to the survivor (medical, psychological and/or other assistance), but let the survivor decide what action to take.

- Ask the survivor if s/he wants feedback on conversations or if s/he just wants you to listen.

- Respect and understand that the survivor may temporarily become distant from loved ones.