



# HOW TO SUPPORT A FRIEND: SEXUAL ASSAULT

## HOW CAN I HELP?

- **BELIEVE YOUR FRIEND.** It is important to examine your own attitudes about rape and sexual assault before you can provide effective support to someone who has been assaulted. An assault survivor will be very sensitive to your moods, opinions, and attitudes.
- **UNDERSTAND.** No one EVER deserves to be raped and/or sexually assaulted, regardless of where they were, who they were with, or what they were doing. Allow your friend to regain control by making their own decisions. Offer to help them with decision making, but do not make decisions for them. If your friend is a survivor of attempted rape or sexual assault, know that their experience was traumatic and painful and their emotional responses can be similar to those of a rape survivor.
- **LISTEN.** Let your friend know you want to listen. Survivors want you to hear them - they don't expect you to solve the situation. Let the person tell you at their own pace what happened.
  - offer to set aside time to talk together
  - let your friend talk, don't interrupt
  - show interest in what they say by facing them and making eye contact
  - if they need help to continue talking, try repeating back to them what they've said
- **BE SUPPORTIVE.** This may be the first time your friend has told anyone about the rape or sexual assault. Offer whatever expression of sympathy that feels comfortable. ("It must have been really scary for you.") Ask about their FEELINGS, more than just the facts. ("You say you feel guilty. How so?") Most survivors blame themselves for the assault and it will take them time to work through those emotions. Instead of saying, "It's not your fault," you can say something like "I don't think it's your fault."

Respond to any emotions your friend expresses, such as fear, anger, or guilt. Each of these are part of the Rape Trauma Syndrome. Discuss different options with them such as: contacting a victim advocate, reporting to police and/or going to the hospital, IF THEY WANT TO. Don't be critical or judgemental ( i.e. "Didn't you fight back?" or "Why did you go out with him?") Instead, acknowledge that it was an awful, frightening and undeserved thing that happened to them. ("I can see this is hard for you to talk about. I'm glad you decided to talk with me.")

## DO'S

- Help them examine legal and medical options, see the resources provided below.
- Find someone to support you as well, hearing about sexual assault can be very upsetting.

## DON'TS

- Don't assume they can "just put it behind them" or think of it as "just a bad experience." Don't

expect your friend to be "done with it" in a few weeks or even months.

- Don't ask "why" questions, as they can sound blaming.
- Don't embrace them without asking first.
- Don't get angry or talk about "getting the perpetrator". It won't help your friend cope, instead keep your attention on your friend.

## RESOURCES

- **Campus Violence Prevention Program Victim Advocate**  
(530) 754-6387 | [cvpp.ucdavis.edu](http://cvpp.ucdavis.edu)
- **CommuniCare Health Clinic** (530) 758-2060
- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**  
(530) 752-0871 | [caps.ucdavis.edu](http://caps.ucdavis.edu)
- **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex Asexual Resource Center**  
(530) 752-2452 | [lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu](http://lgbtcenter.ucdavis.edu)
- **My Sister's House** Sacramento  
Multilingual Crisis Line (916) 428-3271
- **Planned Parenthood** (916) 446-6921
- **Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Center**  
Woodland Crisis Line (530) 662-1133
- **Student Health Services** (530) 752-2300
- **Women Escaping a Violent Environment**  
Sacramento 24 hr Crisis Line (916) 920-2952
- **The House Peer Counseling** (530) 752-2790
- **Women's Health Specialists** (916) 451-0621
- **Women's Resources and Research Center**  
(530) 752-3372 for referrals | [wrrc.ucdavis.edu](http://wrrc.ucdavis.edu)
- For residential halls, contact your RA or RD

## BOOKS from the WOMEN'S RESOURCES AND RESEARCH CENTER LIBRARY

- *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame (Scarce) 1997*
- *The Rape Recovery Handbook: Step-By-Step Help For Survivors Of Sexual Assault (Matsakis) 2003*
- *Sexual Violence on Campus: Policies, Programs, and Perspectives (Ottens, Hotelling) 2001*

If you'd like to read more about sexual assault, visit the WRRC Library, where these books, and others, are available. You can also browse the library catalog online at [wrrclibrary.ucdavis.edu](http://wrrclibrary.ucdavis.edu)



Women's Resources & Research Center  
North Hall, One Shields Ave. Davis, CA 95616  
530.752.3372 | <http://wrrc.ucdavis.edu>