

HEAR THE STORY: WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE¹

MAKE THE LEAP: LEARN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SUPPORTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

It is a sign of trust if someone tells you they have been sexually assaulted or harassed. Your reaction will have a big impact on how the person deals with it. Parents, caregivers, friends and peers can learn how to be supportive and help deal with the trauma.

Support makes a person more resilient. If you are an adult supporting a young person, be sure to include them in decisions about steps they want to take and whether they want to seek supports from the service system. Depending on the circumstances, medical attention may be the first step. You can suggest seeking the support of a counsellor at your local sexual assault centre. If the young person is not ready to talk to a professional about what has happened, don't push. Take your lead from them.

Do: Be supportive, it is important to:

- Stay calm.
- Give your full attention.
- Be patient. Allow the story to come out in the way it wants to be told.
- Believe them, and say so; "I believe you".
- Let them know that they are not to blame for what happened. Say; "it's not your fault."
- Tell them it takes real courage to talk about it. Thank them for telling you.
- Ask about what they need and want from you to best support them.
- Monitor your own reactions. Remember, if you become upset, angry, or afraid, it will be more difficult for the youth to talk about what happened. Be sure to seek support for yourself afterwards.
- Talk about safety and the importance of having a safety plan.
- Help them find out about services and supports they can contact such as their local hospital, sexual assault center, kids help phone.

Don't:

- Say or do nothing.
- Insist or push them to take any specific action without first finding out what happens if they do.
- Make promises you can't keep (such as saying you won't disclose the violence to anyone else), but let them know that you will do everything in your power to stand by them and keep them safe.
- Call the police against their wishes.

Contact your local sexual assault centre for information and to find support for yourself. Everyone is impacted by sexual violence.

¹ Adapted from the National Child Protection Clearing House, Responding to Children and Young People's Disclosures of Abuse (2011)