

Supporting

someone you know who's been sexually assaulted

Validate Their Experience.

The most important step in helping the victim is to believe them. Don't ask, "Are you sure?" or "Did you lead them on?" Remind the person who suffered the sexual assault, that it was not their fault. Nobody, under any circumstances, ever has the right to do something sexual that another doesn't want.

Empower! Ask What They Need

The next most important goal is to empower them. Support choices that increase a sense of personal power and control, which was violated. It is very important, therefore, that they feel in control of their own recovery. Don't push them to do things they don't want to do or are not yet ready to do. Sharing the pain of sexual assault can be a very confusing time and you may not know what to do. Ask, at any given time, what the person needs.

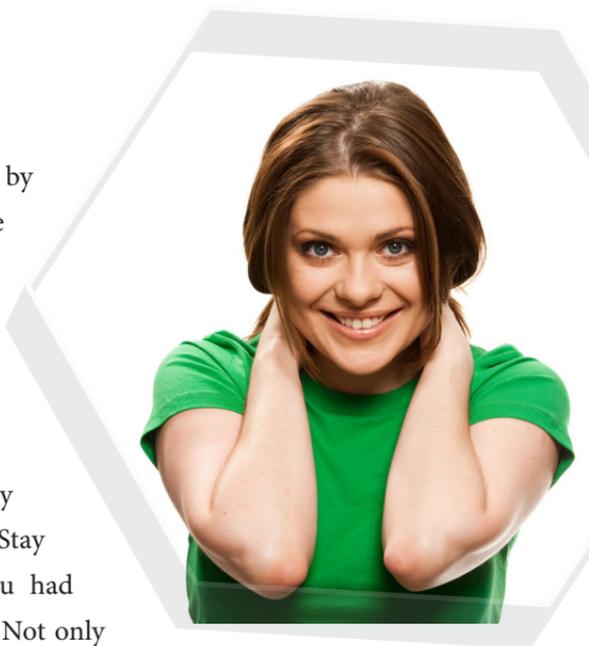
Pain goes away when people tend to it. Being willing, able, and strong enough to listen and be compassionate are what they need most from you. Remind them that they are not alone and that you will be there with them. Only offer what you can do. Otherwise, you risk doing something that most loved one's do that actually adds to their pain: trying to push the pain down. If you feel unable to handle it all, offer to help them get professional support. Consider counseling for yourself to help manage the pain.



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Self Care

You too, have been affected by the trauma and will have reactions. At times you may blame yourself and feel guilty, powerless, inadequate, & angry that you have to deal with this, or you may become overly protective or controlling. Stay invested in the interests you had before this trauma occurred. Not only does this help you remain a stable support person, it helps the person you're supporting see that they're not as much of a burden to you as they fear they are.



Help Is Available

The STOP Violence Program may help you become even stronger and clearer in your supportive role. If the victim is already in counseling, offer to attend with them, if their counselor thinks that might be helpful. If they are not in counseling, let them know about the services.



STOP Violence Program

Dean of Students Office
University of Wyoming
1000 E. University Avenue
Department 3135
Knight Hall Room 118
Laramie, Wyoming 82071
www.uwyo.edu/stop

(307) 766-3296

Office Hours: 8am-5pm

After Hours: (307) 766-STOP (7897)