

Friends, Partners, & Family Response to Sexual Assault

The most important things you can communicate are:

- ❖ “I’m glad you’re alive.”
- ❖ “It’s not your fault.”
- ❖ “You did the best you could.”
- ❖ “I’m sorry this happened.”

Please also keep in mind the following guidelines:

Do:

- Be a good listener.
- Assist the survivor in getting the help s/he needs and wants. This may mean providing phone numbers, information, transportation, etc.
- Express support. Sometimes standing close to the survivor and conveying feelings by touch can be very comforting. However, physical touch may be upsetting given the assault, so ask if you may hold their hand, touch their shoulder, etc. before doing so.
- Reinforce that cooperation or submission does NOT mean consent. (Many survivors feel guilty because they didn’t fight back.) Remind him/her that fear often immobilizes people.
- Try to minimize the number of times the survivor must tell the story of the assault.
- Assure the survivor that it was not her/his fault, and that no one asks to be or deserves to be raped.
- Help the survivor know that this experience will cause a disruption in his/her life, but they will recover.

Do Not:

- Give advice or make decisions for the survivor. (Remember that it is important for the survivor to make his/her own decisions as a step toward regaining control and overcoming feelings of helplessness.)
- Tell the survivor what you would have done.
- Ask them why he/she didn’t scream, fight or run.
- Prod for details of the assault.
- Prevent the survivor from talking about the assault if s/he wants to.
- Stare or make piercing eye contact.
- Ask him/her if they did anything to “lead the attacker on.”
- Ask what the survivor was wearing.
- Ask why she was walking alone at night.
- Ask whether she was drinking.
- Blame the survivor.

For more information, go to <http://www.k-state.edu/womenscenter>
Kansas State University Women’s Center ♦ 206 Holton Hall ♦ (785) 532-6444

