



End Violence. Change Lives. Give Hope.

How to Help

Suggestions for Families & Friends of Rape Survivors

Those close to a survivor of sexual assault have a powerful influence in the healing process. Here are some ideas about how to help if someone who has been raped turns to you for reassurance and understanding.

- ❖ **Be supportive. Listen.** Show that you care about the survivor's feelings. Emphasize that the rape was not the survivor's fault and that the responsibility of the rape lies with the attacker.
- ❖ **Believe the survivor.** Provide the opportunity to talk about his/her emotions and reactions without pressure.
- ❖ **Encourage immediate medical attention.**
- ❖ **Don't tell the survivor what to do.** Instead, help explore the survivor's options. It is up to the survivor to make the choices.
- ❖ **Suggest seeking emotional support.** Survivors of rape may experience long-term problems such as fear, depression, anger, guilt, inability to trust, and loss of self-esteem.
- ❖ **Be gentle and sensitive.** Support the survivor's need to feel safe. She/he may want affection or may want to be left alone. Ask before reaching out.
- ❖ **Recognize your own limits.** You are also having a wide range of feelings and may need support and a chance to talk. The Wo/Men's Resource and Rape Assistance Program hotline is open 24 hours a day. Please call 1(800)-273-8712.

Remember, as a friend or family member of a rape survivor, your role in the recovery process is the same as it would be for any accident or illness. You are not expected to "cure the patient" or have an answer for every problem, but you can become aware of the survivor's needs, give support when possible, and encourage the survivor to take steps and time needed to heal.

Contact WRAP at 800-273-8712 or
visit our website at www.wraptn.org.