

how to: respond to a disclosure

It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you that they've experienced sexual assault. It's important to remember that it can be difficult for a survivor to share their experience. Overall, the best thing that you can do is simply be a supportive, non-judgmental listener.

Here are some tips to help you respond to a disclosure of sexual assault:

BELIEVE

When a survivor is believed, they are much more likely to continue seeking the support they need to heal.

AFFIRM

It's important to counter any internalized self-doubt and let the survivor know that telling you was a good choice.

SUPPORT

Avoid questions or comments that may be perceived as victim blaming. Let the survivor share what they choose to, and offer non-judgmental support.

EMPOWER

Survivors often feel like they have no control over their situation. Depending on your role and relationship to the survivor, you should follow their lead on what, if any, actions they'd like to take. Note that even if you are a mandated reporter working with a minor, it can be empowering to provide age-appropriate choices, as possible.

REFER

You are not expected to have all of the answers or solutions for the survivor. Point the survivor to resources such as KCSARC, or offer to find resources together.

I believe you.

Thank you for telling me.

It's my job to help keep you safe, so I need to talk to someone about this. Would you like to be here while I make this phone call?

I'm sorry this happened to you.

How can I best support you?

There are resources available.

Remember to take care of yourself: it's normal for feelings to come up after hearing a disclosure.