

HOW TO HELP A SURVIVOR

1. **Listen** to the survivor. Let the survivor tell you as much or little as he/she wants. Just because you are curious about some detail doesn't mean you should ask about it.
2. **Believe & don't blame** the survivor. Avoid speculating about why this happened. There is no good answer to that question.
3. Always apologize. Nothing makes a crime victim feel better than when someone looks them straight in the eye and says "I'm so sorry that this has happened to you." **It's not the same as you taking responsibility or claiming guilt for the attack.** It just means that you feel empathy with the survivor for the painful experience that the person has been through.
4. Stay calm and don't appear shocked. The person may tell you the grim details of what has happened. Don't fully react. If you seem shocked, the survivor may start to edit themselves and/or try to "take care" of you by not speaking (even when speaking about it is what is best for the person). It's fine to appear concerned, but in general keep a "poker face."
5. (For men especially...) don't talk about finding the perpetrator and seeking revenge. The person in front of you has just been a victim of violence, and your violent statements will just make the person feel afraid.
6. Don't sound or appear judgmental. It's ok to let the survivor know that you think this is a very bad thing that has happened, but don't start making lots of judgmental statements.
7. Don't try to take control. Rape survivors have had all the control violently taken away from them. Don't contribute to the out-of-control feeling. Keep as much control in the survivor's hands as possible. Look to the survivor for direction and decisions.
8. Don't panic if the survivor cries or is full of anger. Those are normal responses. Let the survivor feel their emotions.
9. Don't state platitudes: "it will be ok" ...will it? How do you know?
10. Ask before you touch. You may want to comfort the survivor physically with a hug or a touch, but that may be the last thing they want. The survivor's physical boundaries have already been violated; don't contribute to that.
12. Help the survivor explore their options. Does the person want to go to the doctor/ER? The police? If you don't know what the options are, call a 24-hr rape crisis line to get the info.