

Our current landscape:

- Twenty-one percent of women experience sexual assault in college.
- Sorority women experience a 74 percent higher victimization rate.
- Only around 6 to 13 percent of survivors in college report their assault to the police.
- Survivors first disclose to their peers 88 percent of the time.
- Up to 75 percent of women who disclose say they are responded to in a way that left them feeling hurt, not believed, or that they were to blame for the experience.

How to respond to and support a survivor:

First, when speaking with someone who has experienced a traumatic incident, be aware of your surroundings and body language. Talk in a private area and make sure the person is comfortable with where you are and who is present.

Do:

- Believe the survivor.
- Let the person know you care about her and are there to listen. Do not interrupt.
- Foster a safe, non-judgmental and private environment.
- Help the survivor understand that this is not her fault.
- Ask questions and make statements that empower the survivor.
- Respect the language the survivor has used to identify what happened. Do not force unwelcome labels.
- Allow the person to express her emotions. There is no correct reaction to being a survivor of sexual violence.
- Ask if she is open to receiving medical attention or counseling services. Offer to go with her.
- Tell her about available resources, both locally and on campus, without being pushy.
 - Not Anymore
- Continue to show your support in the hours, days, weeks and months following,

Do NOT:

- Ask too many questions at once.
- Ask questions or make statements that seem to blame the victim for what happened.
 - Why did you talk to that guy anyway? He looked creepy.
 - Why did you drink so much? You know better than that.
 - Why were you wearing such a short skirt? You know how people are.
 - Why didn't you call someone for help?
- Force out details that the individual is not ready to divulge.

- Invite others to be a part of the conversation if the survivor did not ask for them to be present.
- Rush the conversation – talking about her experience can be traumatic. Let the person tell the story in her own time.

The words you use matter:

- “I believe you.”
- “What happened to you is not your fault.”
- “No one deserves or asks to be assaulted. You do not deserve this.”
- “You matter.”
- “I am here to listen.”
- “What can I do to be supportive?”
- “Are you open to seeking medical attention or counseling?”
- “Is there anyone else you feel comfortable sharing this with? I just want to make sure you have all the support you need.”