

Safety Issues

Feeling safe becomes a major issue after sexual assault/abuse. It may be difficult for your friend or loved one to be alone or to go out alone. Here are some ways you can help:

- ◆ Offer to install locks on windows and doors.
- ◆ Call regularly.
- ◆ Stay with her/him for a while.
- ◆ Offer to accompany her/him because they may not feel safe leaving their home.

Supporting a Victim Of Sexual Violence

- ◆ Listen!
- ◆ Believe what the victim is telling you.
- ◆ Don't blame the victim.
- ◆ Remind the victim that it was not their fault...regardless of any circumstance, no one deserves to be assaulted/abused.
- ◆ Allow and encourage the victim to make their own decisions.
- ◆ It takes time. Be patient and caring.
- ◆ Take time to also take care of yourself.

Available Services:

Crisis Intervention ~ Ongoing Support
Assistance in obtaining Protection Orders
~ Information ~ Referrals ~
Support Groups ~ Follow-up Assistance



Itasca County Office:

1325 4th Street NW
Grand Rapids, MN 55744
218.326.5008 • 866.747.5008

Aitkin County Office:

204 2nd Street NW
Aitkin, MN 56431
218.927.6266 • 866.747.5008



How Can You Help?

When someone you know
has been sexually assaulted

Information for
Friends and Family

Funding Sources:



Blandin Foundation™
STRENGTHENING RURAL MINNESOTA



OTTO BREMER FOUNDATION



When someone you care about has been impacted by sexual violence, you are considered a secondary victim. As a result you are personally impacted by sexual violence and should take good care of yourself. We can't help others unless we take care of ourselves first!

When your friend or loved one has been violated and is hurting, you want to help that person. You can't help others until/unless you help yourself deal with sexual assault/abuse.

How can you help the victim?

Secondary victims - that's you - often feel helpless, but you can help!

Everyone reacts differently. Be sensitive to the person's needs. Emotions may range from sadness to anger, withdrawal to needing to be with others.

LISTEN! If they want to talk, be open. If they can't talk about it yet, know that the details of the assault can be painful. They will talk when they are ready.

Offer options, not final solutions. Allowing the person to make his or her own decisions will help to rebuild a sense of security. Control your urge to be protective. After an assault, the person may feel out of control. It is natural to become a caretaker.

While taking care of the person seems logical, it may not be in the victim's best interest. This can make him or her feel powerless. The assault took away power and control. Let the victim make decisions, thereby, regaining the power and control back in his/her life.

How can you help yourself?

Know that it is okay to take care of yourself. Getting help will enable you to be strong for your friend/loved one and yourself.

Lean on your support system. You also need someone to talk to, cry with, to share with.

Attempts to deny or forget about the assault/abuse are only temporarily effective.

But how do YOU feel?

- ◆ You may feel uncomfortable thinking about the assault. It is a normal reaction to be confused by a crisis.
- ◆ You may feel guilty for not being able to prevent the assault, and yet, you cannot protect someone 24 hours a day.
- ◆ You may feel numb and believe that nothing matters anymore. Emotional trauma can create a lack of control.
- ◆ You may be angry with the attacker. The impulse is to strike out at the offender. You could end up hurt or in jail if you take the law into your own hands. Then you would be unable to provide support to the victim.
- ◆ Your anger may be directed at your friend or loved one. "You should have..." statements will only increase the pain of the assault. You may feel she/he used poor judgment in the situation, but the responsibility for the assault always lies with the offender.

Will our relationship ever be normal again?

You may have already asked yourself this many times.

Open communication between you and your friend or loved one will help you address issues that you are both encountering.

In any healing process, steps must be taken to ensure a healthy recovery. With understanding, patience and love, your relationship can become "normal" again.

While giving your friend or loved one time and space, be sure to remain open if they invite you to share feelings. Remember not to let your emotions fall to the side. You are half of the relationship and your feelings matter.

If it is your partner that was sexually violated, you may be apprehensive about resuming a sexual relationship. For some, sex may stir up memories of the assault. He/she may want to limit intimacy to holding hands, or he/she may have the need to be sexual. Allowing the person to take control of the decision to be sexual will help in the healing process. If your loved one seems to be distant, this doesn't mean he/she has stopped caring for you, rather the person just needs time.

**Remain Patient
and Caring.**