
COMMON REACTIONS OF SURVIVORS



There are some common responses to the traumatic experience of a sexual assault that many survivors experience. While each individual responds in her/his unique way, being aware of the common reactions can be beneficial for both the survivor and his/her support system.

- Fear and heightened anxiety, easily startled
- Difficulties sleeping, nightmares, flashbacks
- Feelings of self blame and guilt
- Changes in routines, appetite, demeanor, sexuality
- Depression, withdrawal from people and/or situations
- Irritability, Anger

PROVIDING SUPPORT

IT IS COMMON FOR INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING SUPPORT TO WANT TO “TAKE CHARGE” TO ENSURE THE SURVIVOR’S SAFETY AND WELL-BEING. HOWEVER, WHEN PROVIDING SUPPORT TO A SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT, IT IS CRUCIAL TO REMEMBER TO PROVIDE HER/HIM WITH OPTIONS AND TO ALLOW THE SURVIVORS TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR THEMSELVES. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE DURING A SEXUAL ASSAULT THE VICTIM’S RIGHTS WERE VIOLATED AND CONTROL WAS TAKEN AWAY BY THE OFFENDER.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Let the survivor know you care.
- Be supportive of the survivor’s decisions.
- Know that you don’t have to “fix” anything.
- Believe the survivor.
- Reassure survivor that she/he is not to blame.
- Recommend that the survivor go to the hospital or doctor for preventative tests and/or evidence collection.
- Be respectful of survivor’s need for privacy and confidentiality.
- Take care of yourself - talk to someone.
- Talk to a rape crisis center.

“Knowing how to help a person who’s been raped is as important as knowing how to help a choking victim or someone who’s drowning. It’s basic first aid.”

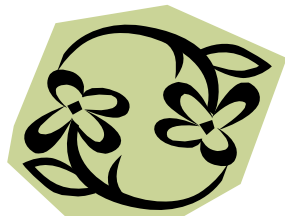
- Rape Counselor Cindi Kammer

**Reestablishing
Trust &
Intimacy**

**Part of the process of
recovering from a sexual assault
involves reestablishing trust
with oneself and others.**

**With intimate relationships,
survivors and their partners may
find it necessary to work on
reestablishing intimacy.**

- **BE PATIENT**
- **BE SUPPORTIVE**
- **BE UNDERSTANDING**
- **BE AWARE YOUR PARTNER
MAY NEED A PERIOD OF
SEXUAL ABSTINENCE.**
- **BE OPEN WITH YOUR
PARTNER ABOUT YOUR
FEARS, UNCERTAINTY &
FEELINGS.**



ATVP

Celebrating 25 Years of Survivors' Strength in 2005

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24-Hour Hotline
Collect Crisis Calls Accepted

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WHEN SOMEBODY YOU
KNOW IS HURTING:
SUPPORTING A SURVIVOR
OF SEXUAL ASSAULT



**Alternatives to Violence
of the Palouse**

Help for victims and
survivors of domestic
violence and
sexual assault

24 hour Crisis Hotline
(509) 332-HELP
Or
(208) 883-HELP