

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE

Who's Experienced Sexual or Relationship Violence

Whether the assault was recent or many years ago, the support and understanding of friends and loved ones can be the most helpful thing of all to a victim/survivor. Many victims/survivors say that the response they received when they first told someone made all the difference in their safety and healing process. **There are many ways you can support a victim/survivor:**

Listen and believe

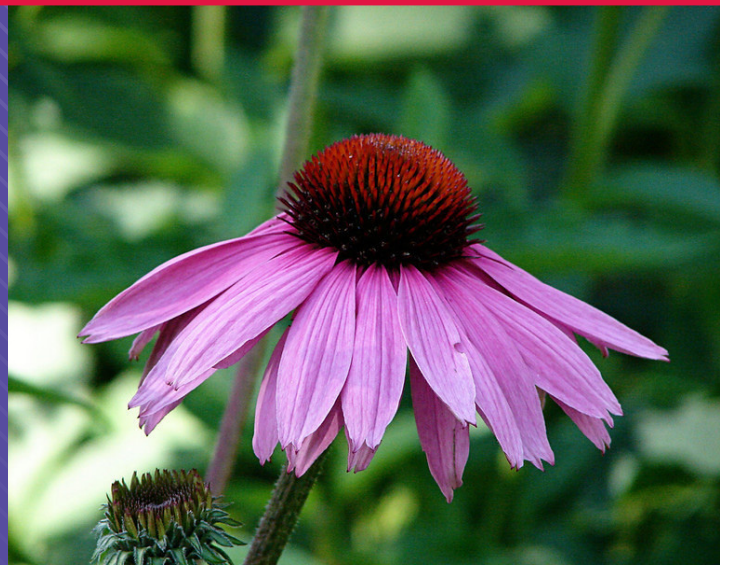
Listen patiently and empathetically, without judgment. Tell them you believe them. Sadly, our society often still casts judgment and doubt on people who come forward. When we begin by believing it is the first step to healing.

It's never their fault

Let them know sexual abuse or assault is never the victim/survivor's fault and there is nothing they could've done to prevent this from happening. Blame belongs with one person, the one who perpetrated the assault.

Don't try to "fix" it

It's hard to watch someone we know and love go through something hard, but it's not our role to fix things or give advice. Our role is to listen and follow their lead as to how they want to be supported and what they want to do moving forward.



Discuss their safety and support their decisions

Let them know there are options for support, medical care and reporting. If they're an adult, the decision is theirs to report the assault, seek medical attention, or connect with a crisis center. Support their decisions and support them if they change their mind. Ask them how you can help before doing anything. It's important that they are in control of next steps.

Be careful about touching

You may want to reach out and put a hand on the victim/survivor's shoulder or leg, or wrap them up in a hug, but this is an especially vulnerable time for a victim/survivor, so ask before any physical touch. Even outside of a disclosure of sexual violence, it's always important to ask someone before touching them because practicing consent is essential in all aspects of our relationships!

Maintain their privacy

It takes courage to disclose. You have been entrusted by the victim/survivor and telling others could cause more harm to them. Tell the victim/survivor that they can speak in confidence to a counselor at The Wellness Center or an advocate at MCVP: Crisis and Prevention Center for confidential support and information on how to help.



Take care of yourself, too!

Get help for yourself if you're feeling overwhelmed or frightened by a situation.

Find someone you can talk to about those feelings. Support and information for both you and your friend or family member is available through:

The Wellness Center

Located on the 3rd floor of the Elliot Center
603-358-2200 | Afterhours: 603-358-2436

MCVP: Crisis and Prevention Center

24hr Confidential Hotline
1-888-511-6287 or 603-352-3782

New Hampshire's 24/7 Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline

1-866-644-3574

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

Phrases You Can Use to Help:

- "Nothing you did (or didn't do) makes you deserve this." or "It's not your fault."
- "I'm sorry this happened."
- "I believe you."
- "I'm glad you told me what you're going through."
- "How can I help you feel safer?"
- "I'll support your decisions."
- "You're not alone."
- "What can I do to help?"

Resources on this page are adapted from The Wellness Center's Student Support Network training materials and the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

For more information and resources, visit the Coalition's website at www.nhcadv.org or Keene State's Sexual Violence Prevention Virtual Resource Center at www.keene.edu/svprc.



The Wellness Center

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