



Supporting a Victim/Survivor of Sexualized Violence

DO listen to and believe your friend. Be mindful of your tone—if you sound doubtful or disbelieving, they may feel unsupported and be less likely to seek help from other sources.

DO validate your friend's feelings about the assault. Tell them what happened was not their fault, and that they did not deserve it. If your friend is blaming themselves, remind them that the only person responsible for the assault was the person who hurt them.

DO help your friend find resources in case they want to report the assault. Their options may include reporting to RCMP (250-828-3000), TRU, or through a Third Party Report at the local Sexual Assault Counseling Center (250-372-0179). At TRU, they can also access the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, through counseling services (250-828-5023).

DO ask if your friend needs somewhere safe to stay. Offer to share your room or couch if possible. If your friend lives close to the perpetrator, such as in the same residence or apartment building, ask them if they want to find a short term place to stay (TRU can help with this).

DO continue to support and care for your friend. Engage them in activities they find enjoyable. Small gestures like picking up their favorite dessert, or practical ones like cooking them dinner, let them know that you're thinking about them. This support can make a huge difference.

DO encourage your friend to be patient with themselves. Processing a trauma can take time, and expecting a friend to move past it quickly ignores how much hurt sexualized violence causes.

DO remind them that they aren't alone. Remind your friend that they have people in their corner who love and support them. This may help them address feelings of self blame.

DO warn your friend in advance. If you suspect or know that the perpetrator will be in the same room or building as your friend, let them know and help them create a plan to address the situation.

DO understand your own limits. You are playing an important role in your friend's life, and there are professionals in our community who have the training to offer long term support. Take care of yourself and your own mental health, and encourage your friend to find a professional they are comfortable with.



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Do Not ask for details about what happened. Don't ask what they believe they did to encourage or discourage the assault. For example, what they were wearing or how much alcohol/substances were used. Don't make assumptions about the perpetrator's gender or expect your friend to act a certain way—people react to trauma differently and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to behave after experiencing sexualized violence.

Do Not ask whether it was “violent”. All acts of sexualized assault are violence, regardless of how they look from the outside. Asking this question can invalidate the trauma that your friend experienced .

Do Not minimize what happened to your friend. Saying things like “well, they didn't hit you, right?” make it seem as if your friend did not survive a vicious crime. See previous point.

Do Not force your friend to report the assault. Nor should you force them to go to hospital. It is important for your friend to regain a sense of self-control—offering options and respecting their decision can help them regain empowerment over their life.

Do Not tell other people without the permission of your friend. Your friend may want and need privacy at this time. If their story becomes part of gossip or rumors, this may cause more anxiety and trauma, as well as put them at risk of more harm from the perpetrator. However, if you believe your friend is at risk of imminent violence, please contact RCMP or someone who can help.

Do Not set a timeline for when they should be “over it”. Everyone responds to experiences of sexualized violence differently. It can take years for someone to process what has happened to them. Saying “you have to stop acting like this” or “you need to move on” can be very damaging to someone fighting to recover from sexualized violence.

Do Not let your anger about what happened to your friend get the best of you. You may want to physically harm the perpetrator, but you can protect your friend and other members of your community in other ways. Channel your anger in creative ways—help your friend get through the justice system, educate your peers and help create a campus environment that is supporting to survivors and intolerant of sexualized violence.

Do Not walk on eggshells around your friend. You need to be sensitive, but your friend may want more than anything to feel a sense of normalcy and routine. Being yourself may help your friend feel more like themselves.