

HOW TO 'TALK' WITH A LOVED ONE ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

When someone you love discloses that they have experienced sexual violence, you may not know what to say. RAINN's 'TALK' method can help you remember how to respond with empathy.

T THANK THEM FOR TELLING YOU

A ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP

L LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT

K KEEP SUPPORTING

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Most of the time, loved ones of survivors want to do anything they can to help— but aren't sure what to do. Whether someone you love has disclosed to you already, or you just want to be prepared for the moment someone does, taking the time to proactively learn how to support a survivor as they disclose can make all the difference. When the time comes to support a survivor in your life, remember this important acronym about how to TALK. Learn more from [RAINN's Family and Friends Toolkit](#).



Thank Them for Telling You

It's important to take a moment to acknowledge how incredibly difficult it can be to tell someone about this type of trauma. Showing your appreciation for their trust at the beginning of the conversation may help your loved one feel more comfortable.

You can begin to show your support by saying something like: "Thank you for telling me this. It means a lot to me that you feel you can share this with me."

A

ASK HOW YOU CAN HELP

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INSTEAD
OF SAYING
THIS

SAY
THIS

If I were you, I would...

I'm here and not going
anywhere. What do you need
from me?

Other survivors tend to do
_____, so you should, too.

You did not do anything
wrong. How can I support you?

If you don't report, you
are putting other people
in danger.

Are you considering making a
report? If so, would you like me to
go with you?

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Ask How You Can Help

Even though your first instinct may be to try to give your loved one advice on what to do, it's important to let them make their own choices about what to do next. You don't have to have all the answers—you just have to listen and let them know that you are there for them to help in any way they need. If this is the first time someone has disclosed the assault or if it has just happened, they may not be certain what support they need from you, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't ask. It's always better to ask than to assume that you know what they want or need. Simply saying something like, "I care about you a lot, and I want you to know that I am here to help in any way I can," can mean so much to someone who has just told you about their experience.

L **LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT**
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A CHECKLIST

DO

- ▶ Offer supportive reassurance
- ▶ Be present
- ▶ Remind them it wasn't their fault
- ▶ Practice active listening
- ▶ Accept their decisions for healing
- ▶ Acknowledge their pain

▶ Minimize their experience

▶ Interrupt

▶ Ask questions about what they were drinking or wearing

▶ Press for more details than they want to share

▶ Be upset with them for not telling you sooner

▶ Challenge their experience, "Are you sure that counts as assault?"

DON'T

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Listen Without Judgment

While it's normal to have reactions like anger or shock when someone you care about shares an experience of sexual violence, sometimes those reactions can make a survivor feel like they are responsible for your feelings and discourage them from feeling that they can open up. Listening without judgment can be one of the most healing things you can do for someone you love. What does this look like?

Use supportive phrases, such as:

- "I believe you."
- "You are not alone."
- "It's not your fault."

K

KEEP SUPPORTING

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**HEALING TAKES TIME;
HERE'S HOW YOU CAN BE THERE.**

Check in on their emotions

"Is there anything you want to talk about?"



Offer normalcy

Keep including them



Let them know you're thinking about them



Reach out regularly

Practice empathy



Changes in behavior are normal reactions to trauma

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Keep Supporting

Healing takes time, and it's crucial that survivors have the ongoing support and love they deserve throughout this process. Every survivor's healing journey is a unique and ongoing process, so continued care will look different for every person.

For many survivors, feeling that their normal life has been taken away from them can be especially hard. Continue to offer to do things together that your loved one has always enjoyed. For instance, if you enjoy cooking together or following the same TV shows, make sure you're reaching out to initiate those activities. Even if your loved one doesn't want to talk about what happened, it can be helpful to spend time together and feel normal.