

Your Local Resources

Supporting a partner who has been sexually assaulted, whether long ago or recently, can be very difficult. You may find yourself feeling angry, sad, hurt, scared, overwhelmed, confused, or challenged.

It is normal to feel this way. You may even experience some painful memories of your own. If so, get some support and talk about what is going on for you.

It is very important to take care of yourself and your own needs. Take some time out when you are feeling burned out. Know your limits. Get some support!

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P.O. Box 2311, Square One Post Office
Mississauga, Ontario L5B 3C8
905-273-9442 (24 Hour Crisis Line)
905-273-3337 (Business line)

Copies can be ordered from:

English Version

Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children
Phone: 416.392.3135 | Toll Free: 1.877.558.5570 | Fax: 416.392.3136
e-mail: info@metrac.org | www.metrac.org | www.owjn.org

French Version

Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes
Telephone: 613.241.8433 | Fax: 613.241.8435
aocvf@francofemmes.org | www.francofemmes.org/aocvf

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assault



INFORMATION FOR PARTNERS ON SEXUAL ASSAULT FACT SHEET

Help

Call 911 or your local police immediately if you are in danger.

The Assaulted Women's Helpline
(24 hours)

1-866-863-0511 (toll-free)

1-866-863-7868 (TTY)

416-863-0511 (Toronto)

Sexual Assault/
Rape Crisis Centre of Peel
905-273-9442 (24 Hour Crisis Line)
905-273-3337 (Business line)

Sexual Assault Treatment/
Care Centres
Go to www.satontario.com/centres/centres.shtml/ or look in your local telephone book.

Women's Shelters
Go to www.shelternet.ca or look in your local telephone book.

Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centres
Go to www.sacha.on.ca/other.htm or look in your local telephone book.

Some Important Facts to Know About Child Sexual Abuse

One out of two girls (Russell, 1996) and one out of 6 boys (Bagley, 1994) are abused before the age of 17. Child sexual abuse occurs anytime a child is tricked, forced or bribed into a sexual act. Child sexual abuse can begin at any age and often begins with molestation in the form of fondling or forcing the child to touch, fondle or observe the offender performing sexual acts. Incest occurs when the abuser is a member of the child's family. Abusers come from every background, class, race and age.

Child sexual abuse is an act of violation, power and control. Children in our society have very little power and are dependent on adults. This makes them more vulnerable to abuse.

Children often do not speak out for many reasons: they may not realize that the abuser is doing anything wrong, they may feel that they should obey the adult, they may fear punishment or blame, they may fear family breakup or disbelief.

Some of the Long Term Effects of Sexual Assault

There is no one way that survivors of childhood sexual abuse and other sexual assaults feel or cope with their experiences. Each reaction, feeling, and behaviour will

vary based on the individual.

Some of the common feelings and behaviours are: Guilt, shame, denial, fear, self-blame, anger, feeling numb, low self-esteem, depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, phobias, flashbacks, dissociation, self-injury, eating and sleeping problems.

How To Help?

Keep in mind, that when a survivor tells you she was sexually abused, she is sharing a difficult experience with you. It is a scary process to do so even with the closest of people. Child sexual abuse can be a frightening and painful experience to talk about as it makes the survivor vulnerable. A survivor may fear being disbelieved, falling apart, or any other possible consequences to her disclosure.

A woman who has been recently assaulted must also deal with decisions regarding medical attention, legal procedures and disclosure. This can be a very overwhelming experience. You can support her by discussing options with her and respecting whatever choices she makes. Let her have control over her own life.

Steps To Take In Supporting Your Partner

- Believe her. Tell her that you are there for her and that you will listen and believe anything she wants to share with you.
- Acknowledge her strength and courage. Validate her feelings. Remember that there is no one way to feel.

- Be open to her survival techniques. Survivors have found many coping strategies to deal with trauma. Some of these strategies may be viewed as unhealthy. Keep in mind that if those strategies did not exist, she might not have lived through the ordeal.
- Do not search for details of her experience(s) - she will tell you what she wants you to know.
- Educate yourself about sexual assault and the healing process. Share your new knowledge with your partner.
- Do not sympathize with the abuser. Express your feelings, without overwhelming her. It may be helpful for her to know you feel hurt by what happened, or angry, etc.
- Respect the time and space it takes to heal. Healing is a long and difficult process.
- Believe that healing is possible for survivors of abuse and believe in women's strength.
- Do not pass judgment. Be clear that the abuse is never the survivor's fault. It is always the responsibility of the abuser, no matter what the survivor did.
- Encourage your partner to get more

support, i.e. see a counsellor, talk with friends, family, join a support group for survivors.

- Get some help and support if your partner is suicidal. Help her through this difficult time.
- Know and accept that your relationship and life may change dramatically as your partner heals. Be patient.
- View your partner as a survivor, not a victim. See her as the strong, courageous woman she is.

Adapted from The Courage To Heal, by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis