



Responding to Disclosures

What Do I Do if Someone Tells Me About Being Sexually Assaulted?

1. Believe

- ❖ Even if you know both people involved, assume that what you are being told is true. It is very rare for people to lie about sexual assault.
- ❖ Offer a simple and reassuring phrase such as, *"I believe you."*

2. Validate

- ❖ Tell the person, *"It is not your fault,"* and, *"It is good you decided to tell someone."*
- ❖ Use phrases like, *"I'm sorry this happened to you,"* and *"You could not have prevented this from happening."*
- ❖ It is advised to not ask *"why"* questions because they may sound accusatory.
- ❖ Avoid blaming the person in any way.

3. Provide Options

- ❖ For specialized professional support, give the individual contact information for a local sexual assault center in their area. In Alberta, free and confidential services can be found at www.aasas.ca.
- ❖ If the sexual assault occurred recently, ask the individual if they would like to go to the hospital to be treated for sexually transmitted infections or possible pregnancies.
- ❖ Let the individual know reporting to the police is an option they may take and there is no time limit on reporting.
- ❖ Respect their decision, whatever it may be.

4. Take Care of Yourself

- ❖ It is never easy to hear that someone you care about has been sexually assaulted. It can also be confusing if you know both people involved.
- ❖ Find someone to talk to about your feelings, such as an expert at a sexual assault center.