

Helping Someone Else

- Help a Teen
- Help a College Student
- Help a Male Survivor
- Help a GLBT Survivor

24-hour hotline: 800.841.8371

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Help Someone Else

Seeing someone you care about in pain is difficult.

Find out how you can help survivors that you care about:

- **You can listen.** Listening is one of the most important ways you can support a survivor of sexual assault. Some survivors will want to talk right away, and others will need some time. Let the person you care about know that you will be ready when (s)he is. Let them talk and talk while you simply listen.
- **You can believe.** Survivors of sexual assault often worry that they will not be believed. If someone wants to talk with you about something as personal as sexual assault, it means they trust you. Try not to ask questions that sound like you don't believe the story. In fact, tell the survivor directly, "I believe you" When a survivor feels believed, you have helped the healing.
- **You can let them make choices.** Sexual assault takes away a person's power and feeling of control. Respecting a survivor's choices helps them get those feelings back. Making decisions is an important way to feel powerful. You can help get information and understand options, but a survivor needs to make his/her own decisions. You can empower the person you care about by supporting their decisions, even if you may not agree with them.
- **You can get informed.** Learn more about survivors' common reactions to an assault. If you know more, you can better understand and support the survivor.
- **You can take care of yourself.** You are an important person in the survivor's life if they chose to tell you about their assault. Take care of yourself and your feelings so that you will be better able to help them. All BARCC services are free, confidential and available to you.

BARCC can also help you so that you can then help the survivor.

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Help a Teen

There are many things you can do for a teen who has been sexually assaulted.

- **Listen:** Often, a teen in crisis just needs someone to hear her/his story. You can show you are really listening by not judging them or questioning what you are hearing.
- **Be supportive:** It's natural for you to have beliefs and attitudes that will be challenged by what the teen is telling you, but, hold your opinions. Right now they just need to be heard.
- **Let the teen decide what they want to talk about:** Don't push the teen to talk about things they are not ready to discuss. Don't pry. Speak calmly and gently.
- **Respect the teen's privacy:** Don't tell other people about what happened to them unless they tell you it is OK.
- **Remind the teen that you care:** You can show affection by listening, speaking calmly and gently, believing them and keeping an open mind.
- Have the teen contact us about getting services.

Help a College Student

- **Be a good listener.** Listening is one of the most important ways you can support a survivor of sexual assault. Some survivors will want to talk right away, and others will need some time. Let the person you care about know that you will be ready when (s)he is. Let them talk and talk while you simply listen.
- **Be aware of the survivor's need for privacy.** A college campus can feel like a very small community. Always ask for permission from the survivor before you tell someone who is part of the survivor's family or school group. By asking first, you are helping to give control to the survivor which is one of the most important parts of their healing process. You may want to talk to other people about what is going on so you don't feel like you are carrying it all alone. All BARCC services are available to you. We can give you the help and support you need without compromising the privacy of the survivor.
- **Allow the survivor to consider all options.** This can be challenging when you may be impacted by their choices. For example:
 - The survivor is your best friend, the idea that they would transfer schools is distressing.
 - You are a parent with high hopes and aspirations for your child, the idea of them taking a semester off is understandable but upsetting.

These are just two examples of the many ways that you may be challenged in offering the unconditional support to the survivor. Respecting and supporting survivors' choices is important to help them feel in control of their lives again.

- **Get informed.** Learn more about survivor's common reactions to an assault and concerns specific to college students. Learn more about resources on their college campus. We can help the survivor navigate the resources on their campus, or they can come to BARCC directly for services.
- **Take care of yourself.** You are an important person in the survivor's life if they chose to tell you about their assault. Take care of yourself and your feelings so that you will be better able to help your friend.

Help a Male Survivor

Let him know that he is not alone. If a man or boy you care about has been sexually assaulted, he is not alone. Male victimization is much more common than people realize. In the United States, approximately 1 in 6 boys is sexually abused before age 16. One in 12 men say that they have been raped or assaulted as an adult.

Let him know that you believe him. It may be hard for male survivors to admit they were victimized at all since male victimization is not openly discussed in most families and communities. For some boys and men, these feelings stop them or their families and friends from seeking help. You can help by letting them know that there are services specifically designed to help them.

Get informed. Learning more about the experiences of male survivors can help you better offer understanding and support to your friend or family member.

Respect his privacy. Ask before you share any of the information entrusted to you with anyone else. By asking first, you give control to the survivor which is one of the most important parts of their healing process.

Take care of yourself. Male survivors usually tell very few people about their experience. If a survivor chose to tell you, you are an important person in his life. Take care of yourself so that you will be better able to help your friend or family member.

BARCC offers counseling and groups especially for men, their friends and families. We have trained counselors who will understand what your friend or family member is going through. We can also refer men to other professionals who have experience helping male survivors.

At BARCC, all survivors are treated with respect and understanding.

Help a GLBT survivor

- **The survivor may be afraid** that people who are supposed to offer help and support will be judgmental instead. These concerns can keep some GLBT survivors from seeking help.

How you can help: The BARCC hotline counselors can help direct you to providers who are GLBT positive. You can offer to check out the skills, training, and experience of providers the survivor is considering.

- **The survivor may be afraid** that (s)he will be rejected or misunderstood by people within the GLBT community which will make the hurt worse.

How you can help: Help your friend or family member decide who to tell (and not to tell) about the assault. Choose people you think will be compassionate, supportive, and trustworthy. If the survivor is male it may be helpful for you to read about the specific concerns male survivors face.

- **Privacy is a main concern** for many survivors. The fear of being publicly "outed" may add to this concern for a GLBT survivor.

How you can help: Be sure to ask the survivor's permission before sharing any information that has been entrusted to you. Suggest that the survivor speak to someone in BARCC's legal advocacy program if they are thinking about reporting the incident to the police and have concerns about their privacy.

- **The survivor may feel** like a traitor to his/her community if the perpetrator is also part of the community.

How you can help: Understand that most sexual assault happens in the same racial, religious, family, or cultural group. This is common, and it is one of the reasons it is so hard to disclose sexual violence. Members of the community may have mixed feelings if the perpetrator is someone they also care about. In communities that are marginalized for any reason there can be extra pressure (by the survivor themselves or by the community) to keep quiet so that any stereotypes or stigma that may be associated with that community is not spotlighted.

- **The survivor may feel** self-blame or self-hatred if the assault was a hate crime.

How you can help: Perpetrators often try to exploit a victim's vulnerability and make the victim feel in some way responsible for the sexual abuse or assault. Tell your friend or family member that nothing can justify sexual violence.

- **If the survivor has experienced** intolerance, hate, or other violence at an earlier time in life, a sexual assault can add to the pain of the past.

How you can help: Understand that prior trauma is not uncommon and help the survivor anticipate challenges or issues that may resurface during times of stress.

BARCC offers counseling services especially for members of the GLBT community and their supporters. We can also refer your friend or family member to other professionals with expertise that fits their needs.

At BARCC, all survivors are treated with respect and understanding.