

TRAUMA & SEXUAL ASSAULT

Understanding the effects of trauma can help you offer better support for your loved one. Trauma can affect each person differently, and potential reactions may include:

- emotional reactions such as depression, guilt, shame, fear, anger, grief, and mood swings.
- behavioral reactions such as an inability to concentrate or relax, loss of interest, avoiding places, people, and thoughts or feelings.
- physical reactions such as nausea, headaches, and changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- anxiety, panic attacks, and flashbacks.

Remind your loved one that there is no right or wrong way to feel after being sexually assaulted. These reactions may be more difficult to manage at certain times. Remember this is normal and these reactions can diminish with time.

LaFASA

*Louisiana Foundation
Against Sexual Assault*

Sexual Assault Crisis Centers provide a 24-hour crisis hotline, information and referral, free counseling, and more!

www.lafasa.org

MAIN 225.372.8995

HELPLINE 888.995.7273

2133 Silverside Drive, Ste. A
Baton Rouge, LA 70808



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LaFASA

Supporting Survivors of
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

The best place to start supporting a survivor is to listen, learn, and comfort them. Healing is hard, but your support will make it easier.

Take time to learn about the short and long term effects of trauma. This will make you more sensitive to your loved one's experience, and help prepare you for the type of support they may need from you. Survivors are more likely to commit suicide, develop eating disorders, or abuse drugs and/or alcohol. However, the more support a survivor has, the less likely they are to experience these negative symptoms.

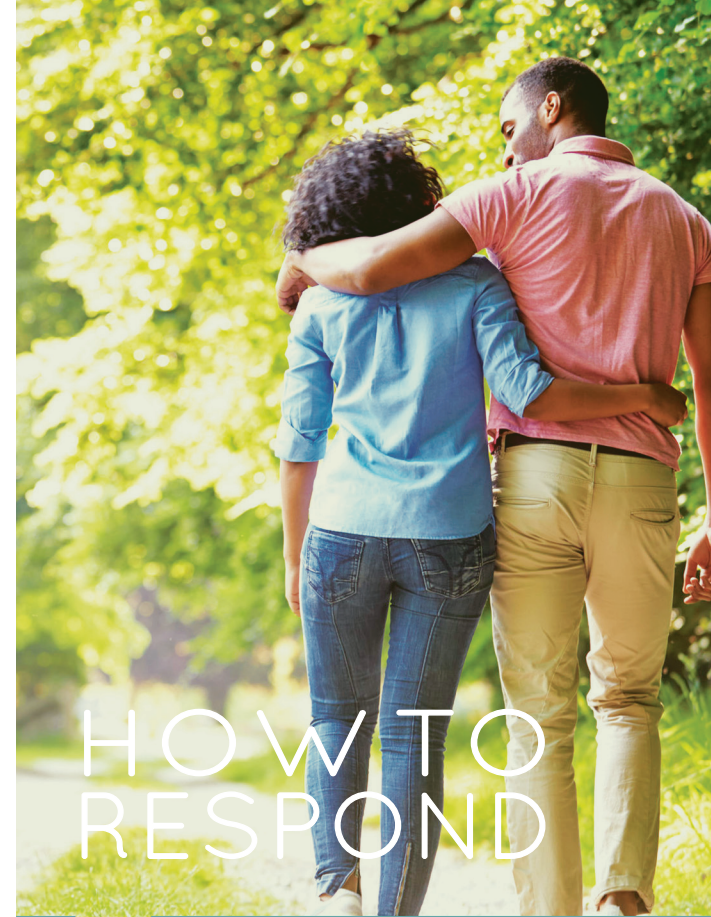
As your loved one processes trauma, you may also experience similar trauma symptoms. There are many reasons this occurs, such as feeling guilty about not preventing the assault. Be sure to take care of yourself to ensure the survivor has a strong support network. Remember, there is help available for both you and your loved one.

**“I Believe You”
can be the most
meaningful and powerful
words a survivor hears.**

There are many ways to show support:

- **Listen without judgment.**
This is not the time to criticize or analyze their choices or judgment. Avoid “why did...” and “you should...” when talking with your loved one about their assault and/or decisions.
- **Find your local sexual assault center.**
You don't have to help your loved one on your own. Go to lafasa.org to find services in your local area.
- **Offer choices and respect decisions.**
Sexual assault takes control away from a survivor. A large part of healing for a survivor is to take control back and make the decisions. You can encourage them to report to law enforcement, seek medical care, and/or contact support services. Survivors know what's best for their lives. If they decide against these options, you need to respect their choice.
- **Check in periodically.**
Check in with your loved one from time to time to make sure they are okay and that they aren't developing unhealthy behaviors or coping mechanisms (i.e. drug or alcohol use).
- **Encourage self-care.**
Self-care is about focusing on our physical and emotional well being. A strong support system and self care routine can help both you and your loved one as they manage trauma.
- **Be patient.**
Healing is a process that takes its own time. Some survivors may be frustrated by the length of time it takes them to process their trauma.

**Call the LaFASA helpline for
24/7, free and confidential
support and information services.
888-995-7273**



HOW TO RESPOND

Some people struggle to find the “right” thing to say after a love one discloses that they were sexually assaulted. Don't let fear of saying the “wrong” words stand in the way of helping your loved one in their time of need.

Consider using these phrases to comfort a survivor:

- I believe you.
- I'm sorry this happened to you.
- It wasn't your fault.
- Thank you for telling me.
- Can I do anything for you?
- This doesn't change how I feel about you.
- I'm here to support you.
- I love you.