

## BEAR WITNESS

Sit with/in the trauma and pain. The pain that you will witness and the stories that you will hear are likely to have a strong impact on you. Initially, you will feel the urge to say something or to fix the situation. If you choose to work with people impacted by violence, you should prepare yourself to simply be there with the person as they confront their trauma and pain.

## EXPRESS EMPATHY & COMPASSION

If you're asked for input, say, "I feel sad to hear that you had been treated so badly" instead of, "I feel so sorry for you." This response expresses empathy without contributing to feelings of victimization.

## AVOID OFFERING ADVICE

Even if you are a survivor yourself, offering advice when not asked for might dis-empower the person you want to support. It may give the impression that the survivor is unable to make decisions for him or herself. If you are asked for advice, offer it gently from the perspective of 'I', e.g.: "In that situation I might ..." which is very different from, "You should..." Too often survivors have heard "get over it" or "move on", when what they really want to do is to tell their story. Accepting their story unconditionally is where healing lies.

## BELIEVE THE STORY

Avoid probing questions about the abuse. There are often unconscious issues that the person telling their story may not yet have addressed. Asking probing questions may come across as doubting the story.

## DO NOT ASSUME

Even if you are a survivor, you have not had this person's personal experience.

## LISTEN PATIENTLY

One of the most important factors in supporting people who experience trauma is to gently listen. This means giving your full attention and keeping in check your reactions to what they are sharing, if they speak. Being comfortable with silence, and letting the person you are supporting know this, is important. Avoid making the person impacted by violence feel pressured to verbalize their experience simply because you are ready to listen.

## LISTEN CAREFULLY & HOLISTICALLY

When the person offers some insights into the experience of past or current trauma, pay careful attention to the person's body language and to your own. Being heard and understood can be an empowering experience and the beginning of a transformative process, not only for the individual but for the community. Remember that the person you are talking to has many other aspects of him or herself, apart from the trauma. After showing your support for the person, inquire about his or her life apart from the abuse.

## SELF-CARE

Working with people who experience trauma can be emotionally draining. Plan ahead how you will take care of your emotional and physical needs and be prepared to inquire about the support system and self-care that the person you work with has (or doesn't have) in place. You may offer a list of resources available on campus and in the community.

## FOLLOW UP

If the student decided to report the rape, follow up to see how they were treated and what response they received.