

# Supporting Survivors

## If Someone Experiences:

- Physical Assault
- Sexual Assault
- Crime
- Hazing
- Sexual harassment
- Natural/human-made disasters
- Experiences of bias
- Discrimination
- Harassment
- Intimate partner abuse
- Stalking
- Serious accident related to a crime

**OVA is here to help!**

### TRAUMA CAN IMPACT ALL AREAS OF LIFE



Emotional



Physical



Social



Financial



Spiritual



Academic

### Benefits of Informal Support and Confidential Advocacy

- Research demonstrates that survivors who worked with advocates reported receiving more services from the legal and medical system, and report LESS secondary victimization.
- Advocacy decreases depression, self-blame, and feelings of guilt.
- Having an advocate at the start may help lead to victims seeking out future support and services.

**YOU**

(Family, friends, partners, mentors)



Emotional Support



Help with Tangible Needs



Get Information

## Unsupportive Responses to Avoid

- Taking control more than you should, i.e. saying things like “You have to...”
- Escalating the emotions of the situation
- Minimizing or blaming
- Defining or labeling their experience
- Asking “why” questions
- Verbalizing judgment
- Telling them “I know how you feel” or “I understand...”

### Unsupportive responses can create additional, measurable negative impacts:

- Post traumatic stress
- Delayed recovery
- Poorer health
- Self-blame, shame
- Minimization, questioning the experience
- Feeling silenced – will not tell others

This impact can sometimes be over and above the actual traumatic event itself!

## Supportive Responses to Encourage

- Start by believing the survivor
- Check on their safety
- Listen/be open
- Follow their lead
- Respect their need for privacy
- Summarize what you hear
- Normalize and validate their feelings
- Ask what would feel supportive to them
- Offer potential support resources
- Call OVA and/or help bring them over

## How to refer to OVA

1. Remember OVA's broad list of topic areas.
2. Tell the impacted party about OVA's services: free and confidential.
3. Offer to call OVA with them, walk them over, or have OVA outreach to them.
  - Email or call OVA with a summary of what happened and with whom OVA should outreach
  - Include contact info: email and cell phone

**\*If you are not sure if it is OVA appropriate, call and consult first\***

## Self Care Tips:

- **Breathe**
- **Sleep**
- **Move**
- **Nourish**

Campbell (2006), Rape Survivors' Experiences with the Legal and Medical Systems: Do Rape Victim Advocates Make a Difference?



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