

Caring for yourself

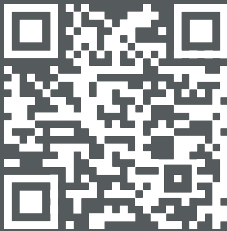


Supporting someone who has experienced a traumatic event can be difficult at times. That's why it's important for loved ones (also known as secondary survivors) to seek out support and take care of themselves.

This can include connecting with a counselor or reaching out to the Office of Victim Assistance (OVA) for free and confidential support.

Contact OVA

Center for Community (C4C), Fourth Floor, N450
assist@colorado.edu
303-492-8855 (24/7)



colorado.edu/ova

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How to help

Trauma Survivors



Office of Victim Assistance
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Survivor responses

There is no 'right' way for survivors to respond after a traumatic event.



Many factors can influence how someone reacts, and it may not always align with what we expected or how we wanted them to respond. Additionally, the timeline and length of a survivor's healing process varies from person to person. However, varied responses are normal.

It is also common for survivors to experience feelings of self-blame, guilt and shame.

Validating a survivor's feelings and reminding them that they are not to blame for someone else's actions can help them feel heard and supported.

Things to avoid



- Taking control of or escalating the situation.
- Defining or labeling the survivor's experience.
- Asking questions that imply blame like "Why did/didn't you...?"
- Telling them what they should or shouldn't do.
- Sharing judgment.
- Telling them you know how they feel.
- Sharing your own experiences or taking focus away from the survivor.

Ways to support survivors



As a support person, you play a critical role in a survivor's recovery and well-being.

- Take the situation seriously.
- Remain calm, listen and remain open.
- Summarize what you hear.
- Normalize and validate their feelings.
- Follow their lead when discussing the incident and let them decide what is best for them.
- Assure them that they are not to blame for what happened (let them know this is a common feeling).
- Give them time and patience.
- Offer to help with practical tasks, basic needs and chores.
- Ask if they want to know about support resources and help them explore their options.
- Allow them to choose how and when they engage with resources (with their consent, you can help make appointments or phone calls).
- Respect their need for privacy and if they do or do not want to talk about the details of the event.
- Acknowledge your own feelings of anger, concern, sadness, etc.
- Seek support for yourself to help process your own reactions and needs.