

Supporting Fellow Zips

Steps to Supporting Survivors by Hope and Healing



Actively Listen

Survivors will often turn to their friends and peers for support after experiencing sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, or other sexual misconduct. If survivors disclose to you, set aside your own beliefs, opinions, and expectations. Be empathetic, supportive, and actively listen. Let the survivor lead the conversation with you, sharing as much or as little as they feel comfortable.

Helpful: Putting their needs first and letting them lead

Harmful: Giving unsolicited advice and asking probing question(s)



Self-Care

Caring for yourself after these heavy conversations is so important. You can't pour from an empty cup so it is important to keep yours full. Hearing stories of trauma will likely trigger an emotional reaction that may linger. We provide trained advocates on our 24-hour hotline to support survivors and those who support them at 330-434-7273.

Helpful: Care for yourself, process your emotions, and use the Hope and Healing hotline if you need a safe space to process.

believe

Start by Believing

When a friend or peer comes to you about sexual misconduct, start by believing. Your response should cover three points. First, "I believe you. This wasn't your fault." Second, "I am so sorry this happened to you." Third, "What can I do to help?" This last part helps to determine how to best support your friend moving forward. It may be helpful to discuss their options on reporting and maintaining safety. It is important to let them make the decision they feel is best, even if it is not the path you would take yourself. Offer to walk with them to the resources together.

Helpful: Start by believing, ask how you can support them, support their decision, meet them where they're at, and keep their story to yourself.

Harmful: Forcing them to talk or arguing with their decision

