

Being There: Helping Our Loved Ones Heal After Sexual Violence

A primary factor in predicting resiliency in the face of trauma is the support of a loving, empowering, & educated community dedicated to our health, healing, and well-being.

Striking a balance between the intersections of Hope, Reality, & Patience is not always easy, but it is necessary to effectively & sustainably support the people we love to heal from sexual violence.

Reality - The objective truths of supporting our loved ones.

- ⇒ Healing is a Process that can come with a great many ups & downs
- ⇒ Supporters cannot take responsibility for their loved one's healing
- ⇒ Being an effective supporter means practicing effective self-care & self-compassion
- ⇒ The impacts of sexual violence can be very far reaching

Patience - Tolerating the whole process.

- ⇒ Give your loved one time, space & compassion as they learn the impact of their assault
- ⇒ Supporters need to drop their expectations of how long healing should take, what it should look

like, and what their loved one should or shouldn't do

Hope - Believing that the process is worth it & creating goals.

- ⇒ Help survivors to find workable options - Hope has room to grow when we have desirable and achievable options
- ⇒ Resources, both external and internal, bolster our resiliency
- ⇒ As a supporter, create both short & long term goals for yourself, as well as support your loved one to create their own achievable goals for healing
- ⇒ Hope is a state of mind. It is not something we can feel without first believing it exists
- ⇒ Hope is teachable

Being out of balance is normal

Build Resiliency Early

- ⇒ Teach kids about boundaries - Appropriate vs. Inappropriate touch. The meaning of consent, and what to do if someone breaks boundaries
- ⇒ **Show through your actions**, early, & as often as needed, that you are an ally
- ⇒ Challenge self-defeating beliefs and behaviors
- ⇒ Keep lines of communication open and honest



In the Short Term

- ⇒ Start by believing
- ⇒ Express genuine empathy & compassion
- ⇒ Be meticulous with your words, to avoid blaming & shaming language
- ⇒ Name your willingness to support them and that you are not leaving

In the Long Term

- ⇒ Avoid judging and rushing their process
- ⇒ Continue checking in about how they are doing, even if they seem "fine" or "back to normal"
- ⇒ Seek out & engage in resources
- ⇒ Hold your boundaries, practice self-care & self-compassion

Consent

- Both people understand exactly what sexual acts are being proposed. Agreeing to one sexual activity does not mean agreeing to another.
- Both people must be fully aware of the consequences and risks of having sex.
- Both people must be familiar with each other's history - including current or past STDs/STIs.
- Both people must have an honest understanding of each other's intentions for the future of the relationship.
- Both people must feel confident that if they decide they want to stop having sex the other person will respect their decision and stop.
- Both people have agreed to have sex in the absence of any manipulation, coercion, threats, bribes, or force.
- Both people are conscious and are not physically, mentally, and/or emotionally vulnerable to one another.
- Neither person is in a position of power, trust, control, or influence over the other - ex: employer, caregiver, teacher, community leader.
- Neither person is under the influence of mind altering substances (alcohol, marijuana, street drugs, prescription drugs) - without prior agreement
 - Consent is not the absence of a NO. Consent is an Enthusiastic YES
 - Consent is always Clearly given and Ongoing
 - Consent today does not mean Consent tomorrow

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