

# When Someone Shares Their Story

How to respond to a friend who has experienced violence

<u>Do</u>	<u>Don't</u>
Validate	Doubt
Make open ended statements such as "I'm here to listen."	Ask a lot of questions
Thank them for sharing their story with you	Make assumptions about the person's experience
Use the same language as the survivor	Identify or label experiences for the person
Allow them to make their own choices	Tell them what to do next
Focus on the person sharing	React with shock
Help them find the resources they need	Try to fix everything
Keep the information private	Report without the survivor knowing or share their story without their permission
Listen	Compare their experience to others
Allow space for silence	Blame them or question how they got themselves into that situation
Support them no matter what they decide to do next	

# Long-Term Support

For a friend who has experienced violence

- 1) Be patient. Do not expect them to “be ok” on your timeline; let them heal at their own pace.
- 2) NEVER accuse them of using their trauma as an excuse.
- 3) Be intentional with your language. Remember that many things that may seem little to you can act as a trigger for them.
- 4) Do not expect them to justify their emotions and behaviors.
- 5) Be careful not to invalidate their fears and anxieties. People who have experienced trauma may feel unsafe in situations that they previously were comfortable in. Phrases like “you’ll be fine” or “don’t worry” may seem supportive, but actually feel invalidating to that person.
- 6) Give them a pass. Especially if their perpetrator is also a student here, they may not want to attend events where that person may be present. Do not force them to go anywhere they do not feel safe. Maybe offer to stay back with them.
- 7) Be aware of who you support. Are you continuing to socialize with your friend’s perpetrator? Are you a big fan of a celebrity who has a history of sexual violence? Are you calling out your friends when they perpetuate rape culture?
- 8) Check in every once in awhile. Send them a text asking how they are doing or reminding them that you are there. Set aside some time to spend one on one with them. Do this not just for the first week, but continuously.