**Holidays/Academic breaks: Tips for survivors**

For many, going home can be a source of relief — a time to gather with loved ones and take a break from the demands of school. For others, it can be a difficult time where new or buried feelings surface. Just as important as making travel arrangements and packing properly, having a plan for your safety and well-being is crucial.

Some students return to a family member who perpetrated sexual abuse against them before coming to college; others experience victimization in college and wonder what it will be like to be around their families or friends from home on a break.  Returning home or taking a vacation may be difficult for survivors, but there are strategies that can help to minimize harm and maximize self-care.

Before you leave campus

* Trust yourself. You are the best expert on your needs and what kinds of interactions you want to have with people. Only you know what is best for you, and it’s your decision about what to share, with whom you share it, and how much you share about your experiences and feelings.  The home environment can often be hectic, but it also may be a source compassion and support for survivors.
* Make a plan. Do you plan to go to social get-togethers? Who is going to be there? Is there someone there you want to avoid, or are there people who simply won’t understand what you’re going through? Knowing this will make setting boundaries easier, such as “I’ll go for an hour,” or “I’ll go, but I have a plan to leave if they make me feel uncomfortable.”  Develop a plan for transportation if you think may want to leave, or a plan for being safe in your own space (a bedroom, take a walk) own space if you aren’t able to leave.
* Know that support is available. Even when you are away from campus, support is still available.  The [National Sexual Assault Hotline](https://www.rainn.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline) is a free, 24-hour service that will connect you to a rape crisis center in your area:  656.HOPE (4673).

**During the break**

We all process and cope with victimization and healing differently. No two paths of healing look the same. Instead of comparing your experiences to others, focus on how you are and how you feel!  Take small steps to promote your happiness and well-being. For example, if you’re planning on hanging out with a group of friends/family, but do not feel supported or find yourself feeling unsafe, have a back-up plan ahead of time such as watching a movie, taking a bath, working out, journaling, or other activities to advance your self-care.

Do things that make you feel safe and in control. UHS has free downloadable and streaming [relaxation techniques](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/relaxation/) and [guided meditation](https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/meditation/) strategies that some students find helpful (male voices).  Try these [one minute](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9Q8D6n-3qw) and [ten minute](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXItOY0sLRY) animated video and ten minute to promote deep breathing!

*If a family member is/was the abuser*

* Keep yourself safe. If you think an environment will be dangerous to you, make alternative plans—even if it defies social expectations.
* If you know that your immediate safety can be ensured, but a perpetrator is present, do not go alone. Go with a family member or friend that you trust, or be ready to call/text someone you trust.
* To avoid triggers, try to go in with at least a few coping mechanisms that make you feel safe. Things like checking social media or taking a walk around the neighborhood can help you feel connected to the larger world around you. Similarly, keep yourself busy with things like helping in the kitchen or entertaining younger children to try and keep your mind off negative thoughts.
* Like all events, have an escape plan for yourself and set boundaries for your time there.
* You have permission to not “make nice” or be gracious with your abuser for the sake of their comfort or the comfort of others.

*If your friends or family don’t believe or support you*

* While it may seem like family comes before everything when you return home, your well-being should be your top priority.
* You won’t feel the same every break, or even each day, so don’t try to force feelings out of yourself or those around you. Acknowledge positive moments when you can. Even if something as simple as reading a book makes you happy, revel in that feeling.
* You have the ability to set boundaries for family members or friends. It can be helpful to plan statements ahead of time, such as “We’re not going to talk about \_\_\_ during dinner.”
* Remember that harmful, unsupportive, or insensitive behaviors and words of your friends or family is not your problem; it’s theirs. You are deserving of love, support, and protection.

**When you get back to campus**

Support and resources are available to you, including the confidential services offered by CSUSB Survivor Advocacy Services.  We’re here.  We care.

CSUSB Survivors Advocacy Services Home Page

[CSUSB LQBTQ Survivors](https://www.csusb.edu/survivor-advocacy-services/lgbtq-survivors-csusb)

[CSUSB Counseling & Psychological Services](https://www.csusb.edu/caps)

[Contact CSUSB Survivor Advocacy Services](https://www.csusb.edu/survivor-advocacy-services/home/contact-survivor-advocacy-services)

A list of support options for survivors on campus and in the San Bernardino area can be found here:
[CSUSB Survivor Advocacy Services Resource List](https://www.csusb.edu/survivor-advocacy-services/resources)