

**Remember...**let the survivor tell you what they need from you. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

When a survivor discloses that they have been sexually assaulted, the reactions of loved ones can have a major impact on their ability to cope and heal. However, you may find you are struggling so much with your own feelings that you cannot be helpful to the survivor. It is important to take care of yourself and recognize your own reactions.

### You may be feeling...

**Shock:** Like a survivor, you may be wondering how this could have happened. You may feel that your life is out of control. You may feel numb.

**Fear:** You may fear for your own and the survivor's safety. You may become fearful in situations that never worried you before. You may become overprotective of your loved one.

**Anger:** You may become angry with the survivor and believe they caused the assault by putting themselves in a dangerous situation. You may feel angry with the rapist and want to get revenge.

**Sadness or Grief:** You may feel sad about how the sexual assault has changed your and your loved one's lives. You may feel like you and your loved one have lost something you can never get back.

**Guilt:** You may find yourself feeling that if you had done something differently, the assault would not have happened. You may feel that the assault is somehow your fault because you were not able to protect the

### If someone you know has been sexually assaulted, we offer confidential advocacy services for survivors on campus:

- Crisis intervention
- Education on reporting options
- Advocacy with law enforcement, Student Conduct and Ethical Development, housing and academic assistance
- Accompaniment to interviews with law enforcement, court, Student Conduct and Ethical Development, Title IX, and the hospital
- Assistance with restraining orders and Victim Compensation applications
- Referrals to campus and community services

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(909) 537-5040 Marina.Wood@csusb.edu

There are also services off-campus.  
San Bernardino Sexual Assault Services  
24 hour hotline: 909-885-8884  
National Sexual Assault hotline: 800-656-4673  
Chat with an Advocate: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

Other Important Contacts  
University Police: 911 or 909-537-7777  
Campus Escort Service: 909-537-5165  
San Bernardino City Police: 909-383-5311  
Student Health Center: 909-537-5241  
Residence Life Office: 909-537-4155  
Student Conduct & Ethical Dev.:  
909-537-7172  
Counseling & Psychological Services:  
909-537-5040  
National Domestic Violence hotline:  
800-799-7233



## When someone you love has been sexually assaulted

Cal State University San Bernardino  
Counseling and Psychological Services  
Advocate Services  
5500 University Parkway,  
San Bernardino, CA 92407

HC-165



## What you can do for the survivor:

### BELIEVE

The survivor's account of the assault, even if they never reported it, if no weapon was used, or they were dating the assailant. Tell them you are glad they survived, you are sorry that it happened, and that they didn't deserve it.

### LISTEN

When the survivor is ready to talk. You can't make their pain go away, but by listening you show that they don't have to experience the pain alone. Talking about the assault can help them get through the crisis. Be ready to listen without interrupting, and without trying to "fix it."

### SUPPORT

The survivor's decision of what to do next – even if you don't agree. During the assault, all of their control was taken away. It is important for them to make their own decision in order to regain a sense of control over their own life.

### RESPECT

The survivor's right to heal in their own time. It is okay for them to experience many confusing and conflicting feelings, and for the healing process to be slow. Be patient, even if you don't understand why they feel the way they do.

### ENCOURAGE

The survivor to get support and to reach out to others who understand. Encourage them to take care of themselves by getting medical, legal, and counseling support and information.

### REMEMBER

You can't erase the pain and no one expects you to have all the answers. Your job isn't to make them "feel better" or "get over it": your job is to listen, believe and support.

### For Significant Others:

- Ask permission before touching or holding your partner. Take cues from your partner, and maintain open communication.
- Be patient. Changes in your sexual relationship are normal and usually temporary. Be sensitive and understanding to your partner.
- Don't doubt your own adequacy or become angry if your partner is not as responsive as usual.
- Your partner needs to be given the chance to regain his or her



sense of personal control. Do not demand or pressure your partner into sexual activity. Resuming sex "as usual" may not be the best way of moving the healing process forward.

- It is also important not to avoid any display of intimacy or affection. This may be interpreted by your partner that s/he is undesirable to you. There are many ways to express intimacy without being sexual.
- Do not rush sexual contact. Allow your partner to make his or her own decisions around initiating sexual contact. It is important that you allow your partner to decide a pace and intensity of sexual contact that feels most comfortable to him/her.
- Accept the fact that your partner's renewal of sexual interest may occur at a slow pace. (It is also possible that your partner may become more sexual than before the assault. Continue to communicate about any shifts in your sexual relationship).
- Discuss the subject of sex in a non-sexual environment (i.e., not in bed).

### Statements to avoid:

**"It's better not to talk about it" or "Just forget about it."** Talking about the assault and remembering the feelings can

speed up recovery if people are allowed to talk at their own pace. Not thinking about it will NOT make it go away.

**"I blame myself for not protecting you."** It is important for the survivor to hear and understand that the only person responsible for the crime is the perpetrator. Nothing that you or they did caused the assault.

**"I'll kill the person(s) who did this to you."** Your anger, while justified, may be frightening to the survivor. They already had to deal with the anger of the perpetrator and may feel they have to try to calm down another person to avoid further violence.

**"Why are you afraid of me? I didn't do it."** Sexual assault often makes survivors startle easily and fear physical intimacy. Many things could trigger feelings of fear and helplessness.

**"Why didn't you fight?"** Freezing, submitting, and fighting are all natural responses to being attacked. Questioning about how they survived may imply they did something wrong or were to blame.

**"What's the big deal?"** Sexual assault has serious and lasting effects on survivors. Expect that your loved one will be affected in many ways by the sexual assault, no matter how long ago it happened.