

INTRODUCTION

It is important for a survivor of rape or sexual abuse to be listened to, and believed, whether they have just been attacked, or are talking about events that happened some time ago, for example, in their childhood.

This leaflet aims to give some helpful information on how to respond if you are in the situation where a family member, partner or friend has just started speaking out about their own experience of rape or child sexual abuse.

DO NOT.....

Don't tell them to forget about it. Don't say, "it happened a long time ago, why does it suddenly bother you now?" Healing can take time and some people block or try to forget traumatic events. This is a way of coping with what has happened. Remembering can be triggered by events such as the birth of a baby, a T.V. programme, marriage, changing job, starting a new relationship etc....

Don't ask them why they didn't fight back. People can freeze when confronted with a terrifying situation.

Don't ask why they didn't say anything sooner. If it happened when they were young they may have tried to tell but been ignored or disbelieved. They may have been threatened or been too frightened to say anything. Most people do try to tell someone at some time.

Don't tell them what to do. They need to be in control of their own decisions about matters that affect them. You can help them to explore options that are available to them.

Don't pressure them into doing, or talking about things they are not ready to face. When they are ready they will speak.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Listen - To what she has to say and let her take her time. It might not be easy for her to start talking about an event that she has kept silent about for a long time. It may be difficult because she may have been told not to tell by the abuser at the time.

Believe - People rarely lie about rape or sexual abuse. Why would they? It is important to believe what they are saying.

Respect - Both her feelings and decisions. If she feels like crying, let her, it can be part of her healing process.

Remember - It is not her fault - no-one asks to be abused or deserves it and she cannot be blamed for not preventing the abuse. The blame lies with abuser.

Recognise - The courage it takes for a survivor to speak must be recognised and praised. It takes a great deal of courage to face up to fears and also to talk about any sexual experience.

WHAT ABOUT SEXUAL CONTACT?

If it is your partner that has just been attacked or has remembered some past abuse which she has blocked out, she may find sexual and intimate contact difficult. It is important to realise that it is not something to do with you - it is to do with the feelings and memories she has. Reassure her and let her take things at her own pace. With your help, patience and understanding, she can heal from the trauma.

WHAT ABOUT MY FEELINGS?

The feelings you are experiencing are justified, but may add to the upset for the survivor. She may feel responsible for upsetting you. Seek support from a trusted friend or family member or contact us at the Centre.

USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Dundee Women's Aid	(01382) 202525
Samaritans	(08457) 909090
Genito-Urinary Clinic	(01382) 425542
Police (Family Protection Unit)	(01382) 665117

LEAFLETS AVAILABLE

Sexual harassment at work.

Information about the police and court.

Information for friends and family of survivors.

Information for survivors of rape or sexual assault.

Information for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Information for women who would like to volunteer.

Information for workers.

Information on ritual abuse for survivors and supporters.

Survivors and flashbacks.

Survivors and self-Harm – self-Injury.

Resources and contacts.

W.R.A.S.A.C service information.

HOW TO CONTACT US

P.O. Box 83, Dundee, DD1 1YN

Helpline: (01382) 201291 **Text-phone:** (01382) 226936

Mondays 12pm - 2pm, Tuesday 10am-12pm, Thursday 2pm-4pm

Wednesday and Friday 7pm - 9pm

Answering machine at all other times

Business Line : (01382) 205556

email : wrasac@btconnect.com

WOMEN'S RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

A free and confidential service

**INFORMATION FOR FAMILY AND
FRIENDS OF SURVIVORS**