

THE IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

Witnessing or experiencing violence usually has a very damaging effect on all who witness or are subjected to it.

If you are or have been in a violent situation, you may be experiencing various physical, emotional or psychological symptoms. These symptoms may effect your ability or wish to take action. Everybody's response is different.

However, there are some common responses which may cause you to:

- blame yourself
- feel numb, dirty or afraid
- feel angry and outraged
- not know how you feel or have a lot of confused emotions
- feel like you are going crazy
- feel very alone
- cry a lot
- have trouble eating or feel sick
- have feelings of hatred - for the person that hurt you and even towards yourself
- have trouble getting the violence out of your mind
- have trouble sleeping and/or have nightmares.

If you do have any of these feelings it usually helps to talk to someone about what happened and what you are going through. This can be friends and family or a support service.

This is an extract from the website of South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault Melbourne, Australia. <http://www.secasa.com.au/>



GETTING HELP

There are a number of excellent services available if you would like help dealing with an issue related to sexual assault or domestic violence. These services are FREE and they are CONFIDENTIAL. You do not have to provide your name or any other details if you are not ready to.

NSW Rape Crisis Centre

1800 424 017 • www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

Provides 24 hour phone counselling and support for anyone in NSW who has experienced sexual assault.

Domestic Violence Line

1800 65 64 63

A 24 hour phone service for anyone escaping domestic violence, family violence or other abuse.

Your local hospital

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Can provide details of your local sexual assault service.

The Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW

1800 184 527 • www.glcsnsw.org.au

Provides telephone and face-to-face counselling to members of the GLBT communities (7 days from 5:30pm to 10:30pm).

The Victim Support Line

1800 633 063

Provides a provides 24 hour information, referral and support to victims of crime.

The Victims Support Line staff can provide confidential emotional support, in addition to practical information on how to access counseling and information on your rights as a victim of crime.

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800 • www.kidshelpline.com.au

Provides a free, confidential and anonymous, telephone counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25.



Supporting a friend

The NSW Rape Crisis Centre recommends the following process if you are supporting a friend or family member who has experienced sexual assault. You can also use any of the numbers listed above to seek support or guidance.

There are a number of ways to assist and support a person who tells you that they have been sexually assaulted. If the assault is recent (such as in the last few days) it is important to make sure that the person is safe from further assaults and immediate danger. Encourage the person to go somewhere safe such as a police station, hospital or to a friend's house.

BELIEVE THEM

Trying to get details and facts is not necessary. What the person needs to hear is that you believe them, that you are willing to listen to them and that you are willing to assist them as much as possible.

SUPPORT THEM

Let the person know that you are willing to listen and to support them in whatever decisions they make. Let the person know that you care and that you are there for them. A person who has been sexually assaulted often feels a mixture of emotions including powerlessness and indecisiveness. It is important that supporters do not push someone who has been sexually assaulted to do what they think is best or necessary. Instead support and encourage the person to make decisions for themselves. It is the person's choice if they speak to the police, if they attend hospital for a medical or forensic examination or if they speak to a counselor.

DON'T BLAME THEM

There are many myths surrounding sexual assault and why it occurs. Many of these myths place the blame on the victim and remove it from the offender. It may be difficult to believe and support a person who has been sexually assaulted, especially if you know the offender personally. It is important to remember that people rarely lie about sexual violence. It takes a lot of courage and trust for someone to disclose sexual violence to another person and it is important that you listen and respect them.

Often supporters feel a sense of guilt, self blame and even anger when someone close to them has been assaulted. It is common for supporters to think that if they had just done "so and so" then they could have prevented the assault from happening. This is not the case, neither you nor the victim are at fault.

INFORM YOURSELF

It is common for people to feel overwhelmed and unsure about how to support someone. Information about sexual assault, its impact and options available afterwards are widely available to both yourself and the victim from a number of sources. Contact your local sexual assault service or NSW Rape Crisis Centre for more information.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

It can be difficult and emotionally draining supporting a person who has been sexually assaulted. Often people who are close to a victim may find that they are feeling a range of emotions and a sense of helplessness. It is important that supporters also have a supporter, someone that you can talk to. You can access counselling and information from your local sexual assault service or from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre.

This is an extract from the website of the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

