

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

ACTIVE LISTENING

1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience some form of sexual assault in their lifetime -there is a good chance that someone close to you is a survivor. Survivors are often blamed for their own sexual assault, discouraged from speaking out, and are often faced with disbelief or are not taken seriously when they do disclose. These are a few of the reasons why it can be very frightening for survivors to talk about what they have experienced, and makes getting help more difficult.

Your support and understanding has an important place in the process of healing for a survivor of sexual assault. The following information about active listening can help you to be a supportive friend, family member, partner or ally when someone confides in you that they have been sexually assaulted.

WHAT IS ACTIVE LISTENING?

Active listening is expressing concern and support for another person by being attentive to what they have to tell you. Active listening demonstrates a helper's willingness and ability to understand the concerns of the other person. Central to active listening is an attitude of non-judgement, and the realization that everyone has different experiences, perspectives and needs. Key attitudes of active listening include being **genuine, accepting, empathetic, respectful, engaging and focused** on feelings rather than on the details of an expressed situation.



THE SKILLS OF ACTIVE LISTENING INCLUDE:

PARAPHRASING: This is a verbal skill that communicates to the other that we have not only heard but understood. They then have a chance to verify the accuracy of what you have heard and understood. You select your own words to describe the other's experience. In doing this it is important that you do not add to, or distort, the other's meaning.

Some possible introductory phrases for paraphrasing:

- So, what I hear you saying is...
- It sounds like you...
- If I understand you correctly...
- You are telling me that...

REFLECTING (MIRRORING) FEELINGS: This listening tool mirrors the meaning and feeling of what has been said. Making an appropriate reflection involves not only identifying accurately the survivor's feelings but also selecting with sensitivity the appropriate time, tone of voice and words to convey this to the other. The aim of a reflection is to help the other feel understood, accepted and encouraged to share more of their feelings.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

ON CAMPUS

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)
SGW H 645, 514-848-2424 ext. 3353

Counselling & Psychological Services
SGW H-440, 514-848-2424 ext. 3545
LOY AD-103, 514-848-2424 ext. 3555

Health Services
SGW GM-200, 514-848-2424 ext. 3565
LOY AD 131, 514-848-2424 ext. 3575

Office of Rights and Responsibilities
SGW GM-1120, 514- 848-2424 ext. 8659

Centre for Gender Advocacy
2110 Mackay St., 514-848-2424 ext. 7431

OFF CAMPUS

Montreal Sexual Assault Centre (designated centre)
(8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) 514-934-0354

Montreal General Hospital (designated centre)
(5 p.m. onwards) 514-934-8090

Sexual Assault Centres
(CALACS) 514-529-5252

Crime victim's assistance centres
(CAVAC) 514-277-9860

**Help and information centre on sexual harassment
in the workplace** (GAIHST) 514-526-0789

Sexual Assault Provincial Helpline (24/7)
1-888-933-9007 or 514-933-9007 in Montreal

SUMMARIZING: This can be useful in clarifying points made in a conversation or when a person gets stuck or goes off the point. It involves pulling together the main strands/points of a discussion and organising them so that they can be reviewed, confirmed or corrected.

FOCUSING: This technique can help to point someone in the right direction. One focusing technique that can be useful when the person is unable to express why they are upset, or is confused is to ask the person

to use just one word to describe his/her problem. Then the person is asked to put the word in a phrase followed by a simple sentence that describes the problem.

¹Ministère de la Sécurité publique, Statistiques 2008 sur les agressions sexuelles au Québec (2008 statistics on sexual assault in Québec), Québec, MSP, 2010. Government of Quebec.

Orientations gouvernementales en matière d'agression sexuelle (Action plan for the setting up of governmental guidelines in matters of sexual aggression), Québec, 2001.

LEARN MORE AT: concordia.ca/sarc

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