

R-A-P-E

Respond calmly. Ensure safety, listen non-judgmentally, and let the victim lead the conversation.

Action Steps: Sexual Assault Forensic Kit. Can be anonymous or notify law enforcement.

Police must be notified if victim is under 18. Otherwise, it's the victim's choice to notify law enforcement.

Encourage victim to seek medical care, counseling, or reach out to a local Rape Crisis center.

What to do when someone tells you they have been raped or a victim of sexual assault.

1. Stay calm, listen, and believe them. It is often difficult and frightening for someone to verbalize what has happened, or a child may be afraid of punishment, so it is important to make sure they know they are safe to share without judgment. Be aware that the victim may be calm and that everyone processes trauma differently.
2. Safety. Ask if they currently feel safe or if they have been injured. Take steps needed to ensure victim safety. Reassure them of their current safety with you.
3. Let them lead, and listen to as much or as little as they share. Don't ask "why" questions or other detail-oriented questions as they can make the victim feel as if the event was their fault. Instead say things like, "I'm sorry this happened to you," "This is not your fault," and "Thank you for sharing."
4. Explain options and remind him/her that they have the choice about charges and a [Sexual Assault Forensic Kit](#) is available to them at the E.R. During a sexual assault forensic exam, a trained healthcare professional can collect DNA evidence from the body, clothes, and other personal belongings of the victim. This information can remain anonymous, or the victim can report it to a local law enforcement agency at any point within a year of acquiring the kit. If it is taken to law enforcement, a police report and investigation will follow. Julie Valentine Center offers victim's advocates who will accompany the victim if they want support. The Care & Recovery team is currently having a member trained as a victim advocate, and we are working towards additional volunteers.
5. Encourage medical care for his/her own care while reminding him/her it is a choice. There may be a risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) during a sexual assault. The only way to know for sure if you

have an STI is to get tested. Based on what happened, a healthcare professional may recommend which tests are important to have now and which may need to be repeated in the future. A healthcare professional may also recommend and provide prophylactic treatment.

6. If the victim is a child (under 18) or a vulnerable adult, you **must** report it to local law enforcement. Otherwise, support the victim's decisions about when and whom to tell and maintain confidentiality where they request.
7. Sexual assault can challenge everything he/she believed before it happened. It is normal to question God or have negative feelings toward Him. Give the victim reassurance you will walk with them in those questions and be a safe place to talk. Encourage him/her to take one step at a time toward recovery. Reassuring with statements like, "Answering the questions you have about God will be more manageable after your physical, safety, and emotional needs are stabilized. In the meantime, we can carry you in prayer and in faith. We can assure you that God has not and will not leave you. Allow time to believe that for yourself." Avoid preaching or teaching about God when someone is questioning Him in light of a sexual assault. Instead, offer reassurance and prayer, being careful not to add religious shame by challenging their current struggle to see God rightly.
8. Encourage the victim to seek counseling, and tell them about local resources such as the Julie Valentine Center or Still Wind Ministries Trauma counselors. Offer to make the call with them or have one of our team (male with male, female with female) go with them to the first session. Follow up with the victim the next day and then the following week to show that you care. Keep them on your pastoral care follow-up list.

Five harmful reactions – Forcing, Touching, Minimizing, Blaming, Discrediting

DO NOT...

- Force the victim to share details
- Touch the victim without their permission
- Say "at least ___ didn't happen" or minimize the situation
- Blame the victim by judging circumstances (ex: mentioning clothes, location, or alcohol use)
- Discredit the pain of abuse with phrases such as, "boys will be boys."

Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault

It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted, especially if they are a friend or family member. For a survivor, disclosing to someone they care about can be very difficult, so we encourage you to be as supportive and non-judgemental as possible.

Sometimes support means providing resources, such as how to reach the National Sexual Assault Hotline, seek medical attention, or report the crime to the police. But often listening is the best way to support a survivor.

Here are some specific phrases RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline staff recommend to be supportive through a survivor's healing process.

"I believe you. / It took a lot of courage to tell me about this."

It can be extremely difficult for survivors to come forward and share their story. They may feel ashamed, concerned that they won't be believed, or worried they'll be blamed. Leave any "why" questions or investigations to the experts—your job is to support this person. Be careful not to interpret calmness as a sign that the event did not occur—everyone responds to traumatic events differently. The best thing you can do is to believe them.

"It's not your fault. / You didn't do anything to deserve this."

Survivors may blame themselves, especially if they know the perpetrator personally. Remind the survivor, maybe even more than once, that they are not to blame.

"You are not alone. / I care about you and am here to listen or help in any way I can."

Let the survivor know that you are there for them and willing to listen to their story if they are comfortable sharing it. Assess if there are people in their life they feel comfortable going to and remind them that there are service providers who will be able to support them as they heal from the experience.

"I'm sorry this happened. / This shouldn't have happened to you."

Acknowledge that the experience has affected their life. Phrases like, "This must be really tough for you," and "I'm so glad you are sharing this with me" help to communicate empathy.

Continued Support

There's no timetable when it comes to recovering from sexual violence. If someone trusted you enough to disclose

the event to you, consider the following ways to show your continued support.

- **Avoid judgment.** It can be difficult to watch a survivor struggle with the effects of sexual assault for an extended period of time. Avoid phrases that suggest they're taking too long to recover such as, "You've been acting like this for a while now," or "How much longer will you feel this way?"
- **Check in periodically.** The event may have happened a long time ago, but that doesn't mean the pain is gone. Check in with the survivor to remind them you still care about their well-being and believe their story.
- **If the event happened within the past 48 hours.** You should encourage him/her to seek medical help, if that has not already been done but the decision should remain his/hers. Remind the victim that you can go with him/her through every step, and even though you can't be in the same room while the nurses are working, you will be right outside. **Evidence will most likely be collected at the hospital, but a decision to press charges does not have to be made at that time. The rape kit can be done and a decision made later.**
- **Know your resources.** You're a strong supporter, but that doesn't mean you're equipped to manage someone else's health. Become familiar with resources you can recommend to a survivor, such as the National Sexual Assault Hotline 800.656.HOPE (4673) and online.rainn.org, [en español a rainn.org/es](http://en.español.a.rainn.org/es).
 - » It's often helpful to contact your local sexual assault service provider for advice on medical care and laws surrounding sexual assault. If the survivor seeks medical attention or plans to report, offer to be there. Your presence can offer the support they need.
 - » If someone you care about is considering suicide, learn the warning signs, and offer help and support. For more information about suicide prevention please visit the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline or call 800.273.TALK (8255) any time, day or night.
 - » Encourage them to practice good self-care during this difficult time.

If you or someone you know has been affected by sexual violence, it's not your fault. You are not alone. Help is available 24/7 through the *National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE* or visit the *Online Hotline, y en español a rainn.org/es*.

Source: <https://www.rainn.org/articles/tips-talking-survivors-sexual-assault>

Resources

(By Campus)

Add the two most relevant contacts to your phone today

All Campuses

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)

P: (800) 656-4673

Description: Confidential support services, education, advocacy, consulting services

*bilingual options for Grace En Español members

Downtown, Pelham, Greer, Harrison Bridge, Taylors, Travelers Rest

Julie Valentine Center

2905 White Horse Road | Greenville, SC 29611

P: (864) 331-0560

24/7 Crisis hotline: (864) 467-3633

Description: Works to stop sexual violence and child abuse and the impact of these crimes through prevention, investigation, collaboration, treatment, and advocacy. This facility provides child forensic interviews, crisis counseling, victim advocacy, family support, law enforcement partnership, and educational programs. Provides 24-hour hotline, 24 hour crisis intervention, victim accompaniment through legal system, victim advocate training, support groups for all ages, and a library of related information.

Safe Harbor

(800) 291-2139 Hotline

(864) 467-3636 Emergency Phone

(864) 467-1177 Office

Description: Provides free and confidential information and help to victims of domestic violence. Services include: 24-hour crisis counseling, emergency shelter, victim advocacy, legal assistance, case management, information and referral, support groups, and children's services. CODA also offers: outreach services, community education, and volunteer opportunities.

Spartanburg

Safe Home Rapes Crisis Coalition

Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union Counties

P: (800) 273-5066

Crisis hotline: (864) 583-9803

Description: Shelter, therapy, case management, support groups, advocacy, and police support

Children's Advocacy center of Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union

100 Washington Place | Spartanburg, SC 29302

P: (864) 515-9922

Description: The Children's Advocacy Center of Spartanburg Cherokee and Union provides an array of services and programs to child victims of sexual abuse and their families who live in Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union Counties: forensic assessments, medical examinations, child abuse response team, therapy, and support.

Powdersville, Anderson

Foothills Alliance

Anderson and Oconee Counties

P: (864) 231-7273

24/7 Crisis Hotline: (1-800) 589-8952

Description: Sexual Trauma Services, Child Advocacy, Family Support, and Counseling Programs

Rape Crisis Council of Pickens County

900 East Main Street | PO Box 2952 | Easley, SC 29641

Phone: (864) 442-5500

Description: Provides supportive and crisis counseling to victims and family members of sexual assault and abuse. Provides information and referral about medical and legal proceedings. Provides support by accompanying victims to any medical or legal proceedings.