



Sugati Publications Product 7--Booklet
Coping with Sexual Assault, For Professionals/Volunteers (44 pgs)

A guide for professionals and volunteers who work with victims of sexual assault

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A few final tips for working with sexual assault victims

Note: These tips and all other information in this booklet about rape victims apply to men as well as women, and to heterosexuals, homosexuals, and victims of all ages, races and abilities.

Remember, you may be the first (or only) person the victim talks to about the sexual assault. How you respond will be significant in her recovery. Let her know you are there to support her with whatever her decisions may be regarding criminal charges, medical care or counseling.

Genuinely listen to what she has to say. Be patient, it may take time for her to respond. Let her start where she needs to start when she tells you about what happened. Ask what she needs, especially if it was a recent sexual assault.

Allow her to express whatever feelings she may be experiencing: anger, sadness, hurt, fear, shame, numbness. Tell her it is normal to have any of these feelings after a sexual assault.

Don't ever tell a rape victim that you need to know all of the details of what happened or that they need to talk about the rape experience in order to heal. Some rape victims don't want to re-tell the details of the trauma they endured; yet others may need to do so as a way of healing themselves. The only people who need to know the details of the incident are law enforcement and the prosecutors (unless the case goes to trial and the victim will have to testify in court). However, if the victim wants or needs to tell you the details of what happened, be open to hearing what she has to say.

Don't make judgments about what she did or did not do during the sexual assault. Empower her to take her life back to be in charge of all of her decisions.

Know your own limits. This is hard work and it can be very difficult to work so closely with someone who has been victimized in this way. Seek support when you need it.

Treat all rape victims the way you would want your loved one to be treated if it happened to them— with respect, compassion and dignity.

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 - ❖ To share comments about the personal or professional impact of vicarious trauma among helping professionals and volunteers for a future publication, please contact the author by e-mail. All queries will remain confidential or anonymous, if you prefer. Thank you!

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