



When Someone Tells You, “I Was Raped”...

Believe them. It is **not your role to question** whether a rape occurred. False rape reports are no more nor less common than false reports for other violent crimes.

Help them explore. Don't take charge of the situation and pressure the rape survivor to do what you think they should. Give them the freedom to choose a path of recovery that is most comfortable, even if you would do things differently. **There is no “right way” for a survivor to respond after being assaulted.**

Listen to them. It is crucial to let the survivor know that they can talk **when they are ready.** Some may not wish to speak with you immediately. But at some point during the healing process, it is likely that the survivor will come to you for support. When that happens, don't interrupt or inject your feelings. Just listen. Your caring but silent attention will be invaluable.

Never blame them for being assaulted No one ever deserves to be raped. Not even if they were drunk or high, wore revealing clothes, are considered “promiscuous,” initiated the sexual activity, or even married to the perpetrator. **Let them know, “It wasn't your fault.”**

Ask before you touch. Don't assume that physical contact, even in the form of a gentle touch or hug, will be comforting. **Give them the space they need.** Try your best not to take it personally. One way to signal your openness to physical comfort is to sit with an open posture and a hand palm up nearby.

Recognize that you've been assaulted too. We can't help but be hurt when someone we love is made to suffer. Don't blame yourself for the many feelings you will have. Common emotional reactions include **anger, helplessness, guilt, shock, anxiety, and depression.** Being aware of these emotions will help you better understand the survivor's experience and be more supportive.

Get help for yourself. Whether you reach out to another friend, family member, or counselor, make sure you don't go through this alone. Most rape crisis centers, realizing that the impact of rape extends far beyond the survivor, offer counseling for family and friends. Suppressing your own feelings will only make you less available to support the survivor.

Remember: Asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength, not weakness.

1.800.656.HOPE or RAINN.org
to find a local crisis center.

To learn how men can stop rape, go to
www.MenCanStopRape.org
Learn more about our youth development
programs, public education materials, and
trainings for professionals.