



IT'S TIME ... TO TALK ABOUT IT! CONNECT. RESPECT. PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

It's time ... to connect. Here are tips for parents and caregivers.

Sexual violence is a widespread issue that impacts everyone. This two-page fact sheet provides information about sexual assault and how parents and caregivers can play a role in responding to victims. Together we can build a community working to prevent sexual assault.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence means that someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. Reasons someone might not consent include fear, age, illness, disability, and/or influence of alcohol or other drugs. Consent can be initially given and later withdrawn.

Sexual violence is a crime that comes in many forms, including forced intercourse, sexual contact or touching, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and exposure or voyeurism.

Keep in mind that sexual violence is never the victim's fault. Regardless of what she or he is wearing or doing, if either person was drinking or if there is a relationship between both people, sex without consent is rape.

Sexual violence at a glance

- Males can also be victims of sexual violence and may be even less likely to report (Hart & Rennison, 2003).
- Among college women, nine out of 10 victims of rape and sexual assault knew their offender (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000).
- Rape is far more extensive than reported in

official statistics, and the majority of rapists are never apprehended (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004).

Your role in prevention

Because you are an involved member of the community, you can play a role in changing the underlying norms and culture that allows sexual violence. Traditional gender roles, power imbalances, and victim-blaming all feed into this form of violence. Some ways you can help:

- Model respectful behavior to those around you.
- Talk with your children about their bodies and personal boundaries.
- Teach your child about healthy sexual development.
- Be an active bystander. Intervene and speak up when you see inappropriate behavior. To better equip yourself in these situations, practice what you might say or do.
- Talk to someone from your local rape crisis center for more information. Invite their educators to speak in your schools, faith-based communities or workplaces.
- Learn more about sexual violence and share information with others.



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How you can help

Parents and caregivers are uniquely positioned to assist individuals experiencing sexual violence, as they often see the warning signs – decreased productivity, lower grades, social withdrawal – before others. In addition, children and teens may turn to you and disclose that they have been victims of sexual violence. Adults are responsible for reporting suspected child abuse.

If you suspect a child is being abused, contact the police or your local child protective services agency, the ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453), or local sexual violence program.

How to offer support

Whenever an individual discloses an experience of sexual violence, it is important to know how to respond. Here are some tips (Bourne, 2009):

- Listen and don't judge. No one deserves to be the victim of violence, regardless of the surrounding circumstances. Avoid victim-blaming and asking questions that could imply fault. Offer your support. Let the victim know that he or she is not to blame for what happened.
- Tell the victim that you believe them. Victims of sexual violence are often met with disbelief when they decide to tell someone. In most cases, their trust has been broken. They may be hesitant to trust others with their story. Let them know that you believe and support them.
- Be helpful. Refer the victim to resources in the community to talk with individuals who are trained on these topics.
- Be flexible. Survivors of sexual violence may need to miss class/work to seek treatment or participate in the judicial process.

Resources

- ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453) www.childhelp.org
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) www.nsvrc.org
- The Hero Project - A Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape project www.hero-project.org
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) www.rainn.org

References

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