

# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

- DO Listen to and believe them.** Be aware of your tone. Sounding doubtful or disbelieving may cause them to feel unsupported and less likely to seek help from other sources.
- DO Validate their feelings.** Tell them what happened was not their fault and that they did not deserve it. If they are blaming themselves, remind them that the only person responsible for the misconduct is the person who engaged in that behavior.
- DO Help them find resources in case they want to report the misconduct.** These may include CCAD's Sexual Misconduct policy, CCAD Safety & Security, or accommodations through the Dean of Students Office and the Title IX Coordinator. CCAD's Counseling & Wellness Center is a confidential resource where survivors can turn for support. Community resources, such as the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio (SARNCO), offer advocate services, recovery resources, and a 24-hour rape hotline at 614.267.7020.
- DO Ask them if they need somewhere to stay.** Offer to share a room or couch if it is feasible. If they live close to the perpetrator, such as in the same residence hall or apartment building, help them find another short term place to stay. Walk them to their room and help them pack necessary items, such as clean clothes and toiletries, if they plan to stay elsewhere.
- DO Continue to support and care about them.** Engage them in activities they find enjoyable. Make small gestures to let them know you're thinking about them –getting dinner together or working on school projects together. If they are upset, spending time with them can make a big difference.
- DO Encourage them to be patient with themselves.** Processing a trauma can take time and expecting an individual to move past it quickly ignores the level of trauma that sexual misconduct causes.
- DO Remind them they are not alone.** Remind them that they are intelligent, strong, and have people in their corner who love and support them. This may seem obvious, but reminding them may help to address feelings of self-blame.
- DO Warn them in advance.** If you suspect or know that the perpetrator will be in the same space as them, let them know and help them create a plan to address the situation.
- DO Understand your own limits.** As much as you want to be there for them, licensed psychologists, counselors, and psychiatrists have the training to offer long-term support. Take care of yourself and your own mental health and encourage them to see a counselor.
- DO Call the National Sexual Assault Telephone Hotline** at 800.656.HOPE(4673). A trained medical professional can help in navigating the support, policy, and care that is most effective in responding to sexual misconduct.

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DO  
NOT

**Ask for details about what happened.** Never ask what they were wearing, things they believe they did to encourage or discourage the perpetrator's actions, or how much alcohol/substances were used. Don't make assumptions about the perpetrator's gender or expect the survivor to behave a certain way – individuals react to trauma different and there is no “right” or “wrong” way to behave after experiencing acts of sexual misconduct.

DO  
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**Ask whether it was violent.** Many instances of sexual misconduct can be violent, regardless of how they look from the outside. Asking this question can invalidate the trauma experienced and make them feel unsupported.

DO  
NOT

**Minimize what happened.** Saying things like “Well, they didn't hold you down, right?” or “They didn't touch you, did they?” make it seem like their experience isn't valid.

DO  
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**Force someone to report an assault.** Nor should you force them to go to the hospital. It is important for the survivor to regain a sense of self-control –offering options and respecting their decision can help them regain a sense of control over their life.

DO  
NOT

**Tell others without the permission of the survivor.** They may want and need privacy at this time, and having their name thrown into a rumor mill can cause more anxiety and trauma. If in doubt, you can ask –“Is it okay if I talk to my mom about this?” or “Do you want to also tell X and Y friend? I think they would want to support you through this too.”

DO  
NOT

**Set a timeline for when they should be “over it”.** Sexual misconduct is traumatizing, and everyone handles it differently. It can take years for someone to process the violation that happened to them and their body, and PTSD can be a life-long disorder. Saying “You have to stop acting like this” or “Don't you think that's enough?” can be very damaging to someone struggling to fully recover from a traumatic event.

DO  
NOT

**Let your anger about what happened get the best of you.** You may want to physically harm the perpetrator, but you can protect a survivor and other campus community members in other ways. Channel your anger creatively –use it to help the survivor get justice through legal channels or to educate your peers and help create a campus environment that is supportive of survivors and intolerant of sexual misconduct.

DO  
NOT

**Walk on eggshells around a survivor.** You need to be sensitive, but the survivor may want, more than anything, to feel a sense of normalcy and routine. Being yourself may help them feel more like themselves.