



Crisis and Emergency Response

During a time of crisis and/or emergency, survivors may turn to friends or family for their initial support. Family and friends may feel ill-equipped to properly support those who have just shared their experience of sexual violence. As family and friends who are on the receiving end of a disclosure the words that we use, if appropriate, can aid in the healing process. As family and friends and those who are disclosed to, here is one thing that you can say to assist a survivor in their healing.

It's not your fault.

Let's imagine for a second that you have experienced a crisis or have been in an emergency situation (other than a sexual assault). As you seek help for your crisis, you are at a loss for what and how to say exactly what has happened to you. Your emotions are all over, you may or may not cry, you may or be not be angry, you may just be numb. As you open up to the first person who you have identified as a trusted or safe person, they ask you where you were. What you were wearing? Why were you drinking? The questions asked of you seem to point to something you could have done to prevent what has happened. What is the likelihood that you would continue to seek help?

It's not your fault.

Now imagine that you are still in crisis. As you recount your story to the person you've chosen for disclosure, they have moved into more questioning. All of a sudden, in addition to the feelings of pain, hurt, and uncertainty, you are now overcome by feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame. All of the self-doubt that you had about being believed, about your role in the assault, has now been confirmed by the person that you disclosed to. How likely are you to continue to share? Will you seek services? Do you feel deserving of support?

"It's not your fault" gives room for the survivor to exhale. There are stories that we have all heard that tell us about who a victim of sexual violence is and what the victim can do to prevent their victimization. These messages and stories create harm when a person is victimized. The person who assaulted the survivor is solely responsible for the assault.

The State of Michigan Sexual Assault Hotline, is supported by Crime Victim Assistance Grant Award awarded to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence by the Division of Victim Services, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The grant award comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services."



Crisis and Emergency Response

Assuring a survivor by stating, **it's not your fault** may allow for the survivor to further share. Restate to the survivor that no matter what you did, no matter what you were wearing, or where you were, or what you drank, **it's not your fault**.

There is help.

As support people of those who are survivors of sexual violence, we feel lost and helpless without tangible resources to provide to our loved ones.

Fortunately, **there is help**.

If someone you know has disclosed surviving sexual violence to you, say with confidence, **"There is help."** Provide 855-VOICES4 to your loved one. When your loved one calls the VOICES4 hotline, their call will be received by an advocate who has been trained in providing empathetic listening, support and warm referrals.

There is help for you as well. 855-VOICES4 can assist you with what to say to be supportive as well as provide support to you as you aide the survivor through their immediate crisis.