



## 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.

### ***I am here for you.***

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 don't respond or ask what it is you want them to do. You are unsure of what to do next.

### ***I am here for you.***

Have you ever felt alone and isolated when you needed support the most? Survivors of sexual violence often experience a sense of aloneness and isolation when faced with a support system that does not know how to provide support. The feelings are also exacerbated when it doesn't feel safe to tell anyone what has occurred. As a part of the support system to a survivor, decreasing the feeling of being alone and isolated, assists in the survivor's safety.

**"I am here for you"** is a way to express that support to a survivor. Saying those words reassure the survivor that they will not have to go through whatever comes after the assault by themselves. **I am here for you** does not have to be verbalized. **I am here for you** can be expressed by sitting with someone and being present while they go to appointments, speak with law enforcement and/or hospital personnel. Sitting in quiet with a survivor, listening to a survivor, and accompaniment are all expressions of **I am here for you.**

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### **There is help.**

As support people of those who are survivors of sexual violence, we may 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.