

WHAT TO DO!

What should I do if I am sexually assaulted?

- Find a safe place
 - Preserve evidence (do not take a shower, brush your teeth, or change clothes)
 - Get medical attention (to include STD screening, risk of pregnancy and sexual assault exam (males and females))
 - Call a Victim Advocate. They can discuss options available to you on how to handle your situation and offer information referrals to community resources.
 - If you so choose, notify law enforcement.
- *Remember:** It is never your fault. Healing from a traumatic event, such as sexual assault takes time. Sexual assault is not gender specific. Both males and females are victims and survivors of sexual assault. And it's **NEVER** too late to call and get help.

Common reactions of sexual assault survivors:

Shock, fear: In the hours/days after the assault, shock and denial are common reactions. Survivors may fear that the attacker will return to hurt them again. Survivors may also fear being alone or being around people that remind them of the attacker.

Denial: Survivors may deny that the assault has affected them in any way. Denial of the assault may last a brief time, or for a period of several years.

Suffering and Feelings of loss: Once the survivor understands the reality of the assault, and the effect it may have on their life, they may experience strong feelings of loss and depression. Common reactions include fear, nightmares, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, physical aches, and difficulty concentrating.

Important ways family and friends can help a sexual assault survivor:

- Listen. Be there. Don't be judgmental.
- Be patient. Don't try to rush the healing process or quickly "make it better."
- Believe the survivor.
- Be respectful of the survivor's decisions.

- Accept their choice of what to do about the sexual assault --don't be overly protective. Ask him/her what they need, help him/her list options, encourage him/her to make own decisions. Even if you disagree, it is very important that he/she make their own decisions and have them be respected.
- Encourage the survivor to seek services. They can contact the Community Counseling Center at (910) 451-2864 or the local Women's Center at (910) 347-4000 for advocacy services and information/referral.
- Educate yourself about sexual assault/rape, and the healing process.

Ways To Take Care Of Yourself!

Get support from friends and family -- try to identify people you trust to validate your feelings. Spend time with people who know your strengths and positive qualities. Try not to isolate yourself. Talk about the assault and express feelings -- you can choose when, where, and with whom. You can also decide how much or how little to discuss.

Use stress reduction techniques -- exercises like walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, weight-lifting; relaxation techniques like massage, music, and meditation.

Maintain a balanced diet and sleep cycle and avoid overusing caffeine, sugar, nicotine, alcohol, or other drugs.

Take "timeouts." Give yourself permission to take quiet moments to reflect, relax, and rejuvenate -- especially during times you feel stressed or unsafe.

Try reading. Reading can be a relaxing, healthy activity. Try to find short periods of uninterrupted leisure reading time.

Consider writing or journaling as a way of expressing thoughts and feelings. Write a letter about how you feel about what happened to you. Be as specific as you can. You can also draw pictures about the anger or hurt you feel as a way of releasing the emotional pain.

Get into counseling.