

SUPPORTING AN ADULT SURVIVOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT IN PEI

- A guide for friends and family members -

www.peirsac.org

Messages to share:

- I am *sorry* that this happened to you
- This was *not* your fault.
- I am *glad* you told me
- I will do my best to *support* you

Here are some community resources that can be helpful:

The PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre

Main Office: 902-566-1864

Counselling: 902-368-8055

www.peirsac.org

Victim Services

Queens and King County:
902-368-4582

Prince County:

1. Believe

Communicate that no matter the circumstance, *it was not their fault*. No one asks to be sexually assaulted. Listen without judgement or doubt.

2. Listen

Avoid intrusive questions, let them decide how much to share. Avoid questioning their actions or behaviours at the time of the assault or afterwards, as this can imply blame.

3. Don't tell them how to feel

There is *no right way* to act and feel after an assault. Fear, crying, shock, numbness, disbelief, embarrassment, anger, self-blame, guilt and grief are all common reactions.

4. Don't excuse or defend the perpetrator

There is *no excuse* for sexually assaulting a person, even if the perpetrator was drunk or stoned; or even if they had been dating or had sex previously. A victim may minimize what happened in order to protect the perpetrator, who is often known, or because they fear retaliation.

5. Support them by respecting their choices

The feeling of loss of control is often an effect of sexual assault. It is therefore important to help a victim feel that *they are in control over what happens next*. Ask if they want to report to police, seek medical attention or want counselling, and support their decision. (Some situations require mandatory reporting under the Child Protection or the Adult Protection Act).

6. Accompaniment to police or hospital

Your friend/family member may ask you to accompany them to the police or hospital. As a support person, you can be a comforting and reassuring presence. You may be asked by police or medical personnel to remain outside the room for parts of the interview or examination.

7. Afterwards

If your friend or family member discloses information to you, respect their confidentiality by not talking about it with others. Check in regularly to see how they are doing. If they are having intense reactions long after the assault, they may benefit from talking to a professional.

