

RESPONDING WITH COMPASSION

When someone discloses sexual or domestic violence, your response is critical to their recovery and decisions about what to do next.

THREE KEY THINGS TO SAY

When you say...

I am sorry for what has happened to you
What happened is a crime
I will do what I can to help

They hear...

I believe you
This is not your fault
You are not alone

INITIAL RESPONSES

Do:

- Listen to the story.
- Let them express how they feel.
- Let them cry.
- Encourage them.
- Not worry if parts of the story don't add up.
- Tell them you are sorry for what happened.
- Explain what you can do.

Do Not:

- Tell them what to do.
- Try to take over.
- Ask "why" questions.
Why questions are blame questions.
- Get angry on their behalf.
They have enough to deal with without worrying about you.
- Assume you know how they feel.
Everyone experiences trauma differently.

REMEMBER

The decision about what to do is always with the **person who has experienced sexual assault or domestic violence**

THE REALITIES

- Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence is a crime
- It can happen to anyone
- It is never the fault of the person who has experienced the violence

Myths only exist to blame the victim or excuse the perpetrator