



SUPPORTING A VICTIM

When someone you care about has been affected by a traumatic event, it can be distressing and confusing to understand your role in the healing process. The person won't always know what they want or need, they may feel confused and have difficulty making decisions. They may act and react in ways you don't understand. Being supportive throughout this process requires *patience, willingness, and acceptance*.

What to say and do

Be Present:

- Be there. Your presence may provide the most comfort.
- Be a good listener. Allow the person to tell his/her story, at their own time.
- Allow for silence. If you can relate to what they're going through, now is not the time to share or compare.

Validate:

- Validate any emotions they show. He/she needs assurance that their feelings are normal.
- Continue to validate what they're going through as it may take time for it to sink in.

Acknowledge

- Know you can't solve the problem.
- Acknowledge your own feelings as they come up. Sit with them, take note of what you feel and why, and continue to be there. Awareness of your own feelings will help you stay strong during this painful time.

What to avoid

- Don't label the experiences, feelings, or behaviors they're going through as a disability or illness. Remain non-judgmental.
- Avoid simple reassurances such as, "I know how you feel", "You'll be okay", "Time heals all wounds", "Don't cry," "You have to be strong," "Get over it. Life moves on."
- Don't pressure them to talk. They will share what they want to when they want to. Let them know you're there and ready to listen.
- Don't use words that may be interpreted as accusatory: *should, shouldn't, good, bad, wrong, right*