

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

It is possible a guest at your event may feel safe enough to disclose abuse or assault. How supporters respond to a disclosure is crucial in aiding the survivor as they move through the healing process.

Below are RAINN's recommended responses:

BELIEVE

"I believe you. / It took a lot of courage to tell me about this." It can be extremely difficult for survivors to come forward and share their story. They may feel ashamed, concerned that they won't be believed, or worried they'll be blamed. Leave any "why" questions or investigations to the experts—your job is to support this person. Be careful not to interpret calmness as a sign that the event did not occur—everyone responds to traumatic events differently. The best thing you can do is to believe them.

REMOVE BLAME

"It's not your fault. / You didn't do anything to deserve this." Survivors may blame themselves, especially if they know the perpetrator personally. Remind the survivor, maybe even more than once, that they are not to blame

SUPPORT

"You are not alone. / I care about you and am here to listen or help in any way I can." Let the survivor know that you are there for them and willing to listen to their story if they are comfortable sharing it. Assess if there are people in their life they feel comfortable going to and remind them that there are service providers who will be able to support them as they heal from the experience.

EMPATHIZE

"I'm sorry this happened. / This shouldn't have happened to you." Acknowledge that the experience has affected their life. Phrases like "This must be really tough for you," and, "I'm so glad you are sharing this with me," help to communicate empathy.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

RAINN

National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE
www.rainn.org

National Center for Victims of Crime

(202) 467-8700
www.victimsofcrime.org

VictimConnect

1-855-4-VICTIM
www.VictimConnect.org

ChildHelp

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4-A-CHILD
www.childhelp.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org