



How You Can Support A Child Who Has Been Sexually Assaulted (Information for Parents and Caregivers)

When this happens, people often do not know what to say or do. It may be helpful to consider some useful ways to offer support to a child in your life.

What can I do?

- Give the child love and provide for their safety.
- Believe in the child.
- Listen. There is no need for repeated questions. Offer compassion, care and support.
- Be honest about what you know or don't know about the future.
- Protect the child from unnecessary talk of the events with others. Family and friends can give support without questioning the child or learning all the details.
- Reassure the child that it was good to tell. It is not the child's fault. The person who harmed the child needs help and is responsible for the sexual assault.
- Try to remain calm, open and clear about personal feelings, the events, and the future.
- Get help and support for the child, yourself and other family members.

What should I avoid?

- Do not blame the child for what happened or suggest it would be better if the child had not told.
- Do not blame yourself.
- Do not encourage the child to be silent about it, or forget it ever happened.
- Do not isolate yourself or the child from others who may be able to help.
- Do not dismiss any feelings related to these events as not worth worry, or not important.

What can I expect?

Each person is special. Each response is one's own.

In younger children, you may notice an increase in difficult behaviors. The child may talk back, seem frustrated, or show disrespect. This may be the child's way of showing how overwhelming feelings are during this time. Be supportive. Talk about the changes you see. Stay clear about rules and guidelines for behavior. Knowing the rules and having a routine can be a relief.

For teenagers, life is already a challenge as they try to figure out who they are! Communication can be tough in general. Be available to listen. Don't judge. If you set new limits on their freedom or contact with peers, teens may see this as a punishment for being assaulted, rather than as a concern for their safety. While you may want to change the rules, what helps is keeping the same routine for friends, school and even dating.

Sometimes if you have had a past experience with abuse or assault, feelings you have may be more intense. Please call us if you need help.

Sexual Assault Treatment Center
414-219-5555

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.