

Healing a Heart

Someone close to you, who has been sexually assaulted, is going through a difficult and painful time. This can be a traumatic experience for you also as a partner or friend. You may want to 'make it better' for your loved one, and must realize that this will be a slow process. The following ideas may be helpful for you.

Remember that one of the main reasons that people tell no one is their fear of not being believed. Telling someone about a sexual assault takes a lot of courage.

Listen to them. On the other hand, realize that they may NOT want to talk about it, or any of the details, especially to you. They may feel a deep shame.

Avoid asking them 'why' questions. These are questions that will make them feel that you do not believe them.

Help them to get whatever assistance they may need: medical, emotional, legal. Help them to gather information about things they may need to know about.

Initially they may be comforted by your efforts to protect them. However, they may also find it stifling and react with anger. They may begin to feel that they can't take care of themselves - that they're helpless in the world - and this will make them feel even worse.

Reassure them that whatever they did at the time of the sexual assault, they needed to do in order to survive the assault.

Avoid telling them how they should feel, such as "You should be angry". Someone who has been sexually assaulted may feel many emotions at different times.

Your partner may wish to be intimate soon after the assault, to forget. Or they may wish to avoid intimacy altogether for a while. Be patient.

Remember to take time for yourself; this assault has affected you as well. You will likely feel violated as well. Be patient with yourself, as well as with your partner. Don't hesitate to seek out someone that you can talk to as well.

REMEMBER - YOU ARE NOT ALONE

The Waterloo Region Sexual Assault Treatment Centre is here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

749-6994