

# ***Supporting A Rape Victim***

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## ***Ensure Victim Safety***

The primary concern for a victim is to ensure safety. In becoming aware of an assault, ask "Are you safe?" Getting to a safe place is of utmost concern.

## ***Listen***

When a friend is in crisis, impulse may be to give advice or take some action. The most appropriate response is to sit tight and listen. Allow the victim to process their experience and tell their story without questions, without asking for clarification, and without seeking to get all of the details. Include comforting words such as and "It's taking a lot of courage for you to share this with me."



## ***Believe***

When a person discloses a rape, it is appropriate to express concern for the victim and to demonstrate you believe him or her. Saying, "Oh, I'm sure he didn't mean it," or "She would never do something like that" demonstrate your doubt that a sexual assault occurred. According to national statistics, less than 2% of rape reports are fabricated. "I believe you" is an appropriate response.

## ***Offer Options***

When someone is raped, all control is taken away. It is important not to make any decisions for a rape victim. Let a victim decide what to do (i.e.: seek medical attention; call law enforcement; call parents; talk about it—choices are up to the victim to decide what to do). It is OK for you to offer options, but let the victim decide.

## ***"It's not your fault."***

Rape victims often feel that they did something wrong or that they contributed in some way to their victimization. Repeatedly offer "it's not your fault." Reinforce that the victim is not to blame.

## ***Provide Support***

Be careful not to promise more than you can give. Decide what you are and are not able to provide for the victim. Be open to suggesting other resources for the victim to access.

## ***Suggest Counseling***

Counseling is an excellent choice for a rape victim. Given the range of emotions and reactions that are normal for such a traumatic experience, counseling can help a victim recover healthfully. You may also want to talk to a counselor if you feel it will be helpful. Rape is a difficult issue which takes a toll on both victims and those surrounding the victim.

## ***Resources***

### ***Campus:***

- Counseling Center, 715-346-3511
- Rights and Responsibilities, 715-346-2611
- Student Health Promotion Office, 715-346-4313
- Student Health Services, 715-346-4646
- UWSP Protective Services, 715-346-3456

### ***Community:***

- Local emergency number, 911
- St. Michael's Hospital Emergency Room, 715-346-5100
- Sexual Assault Victims Services, 715-343-7114

