

# How to Cope with the Effects of Abuse or Exploitation

Recovery from psychological trauma is often a difficult and gradual process. When a trauma survivor takes direct action to cope with problems, they often feel a greater sense of personal power and control. Positive coping actions are those that help to reduce anxiety or other distressing reactions, and improve the situation in a way that does not harm the survivor further.

Positive coping methods can include:

- Learning about trauma and its effects
- Talking to another person for support
- Practicing relaxation methods
- Challenging negative thoughts and beliefs
- Increasing positive and enjoyable activities
- Calling a therapist for help



# How to Support a Loved One Who Has Experienced Abuse or Exploitation

It can be hard to know what to do to help a friend, family member, or student who is a survivor of abuse or exploitation. Please read below for some helpful hints for parents or partners/friends of those who have experienced abuse and/or exploitation. Here's how you can help:

## What to say to a survivor:

- I'm sorry this happened to you
- It wasn't your fault
- You survived; obviously you did the right things
- Thank you for telling me
- I'm always here if you want to talk
- Can I do anything for you?

## What parents can do:

The process of recovering from abuse and/or exploitation takes time. As a parent, your help during this process is essential. Survivors need a great deal of support and caring as they begin to address and survive a very frightening and sometimes violent experience. Parents can help by:

- Listen and be available
  - Believe and do not judge
  - Recognize that recovery takes a long time
  - Respect the decisions that the survivor makes
  - Be gentle, sensitive, and respectful of the survivor's wishes for closeness and affection
  - Find your own support
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# How to Support a Loved One Who Has Experienced Abuse or Exploitation

## What friends and partners can do:

- I'm sorry this happened to you
- It wasn't your fault
- You survived; obviously you did the right things
- Thank you for telling me
- I'm always here if you want to talk
- Can I do anything for you?

## What friends and partners can do:

Friends and partners play a key role in both preventing abuse and exploitation from occurring as well as lending support to a survivor. They are often the first people in whom a survivor might confide. Here are a few things to keep in mind to support your friend.

- Believe your friend / partner. People rarely lie about sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, or harassment.
- Listen to your friend/partner and concentrate on understanding their feelings. • Ask how you can help... and do it.
- Offer to accompany your friend/partner in seeking medical attention, counseling, or reporting to law enforcement.
- Help the friend/partner regain a sense of control by supporting her or him in making decisions about whom to tell and how to proceed.
- Remind your friend/ partner that sexual violence is NOT their fault!
- Offer shelter or companionship so that she/he doesn't have to be alone.
- Be available and supportive

Victims of abuse and/or exploitation may experience a range of emotional responses after an incident. There's no "right way" to heal from trauma. Be there to listen, to care, and to help!