

# How to Help a Friend

## What to do if Someone Discloses a Sexual Assault Experience to You

### **BELIEVE them**

Don't question whether it happened. The hardest step for a survivor of abuse is to tell someone what happened. Good responses would be:  
I'm glad you're alive.  
I believe you.

### **HELP them explore their options**

Don't take charge of the situation and pressure the survivor to do what you think they should. That's what the abuser did.

### **LISTEN to them**

It is crucial that you let survivors know that they can talk to you about their experience when they are ready. Your caring attention will be invaluable.

### **NEVER BLAME them for being assaulted**

No one deserves to be hurt by another person. No matter what they wore, how many times they had sex, if they were married, whether or not they went up to the perpetrator's room, they didn't make this happen. The abuser did.  
Say:

It's not your fault.

### **GET HELP for yourself**

Recognize that you've been hurt too. We can't help but be hurt when someone we care about is harmed. Talk about how you feel with anyone you can trust: a friend, family member, counselor, religious official, etc. Getting help when needed is a sign of strength, not weakness.

#### FOR MORE EDUCATION OR TO SCHEDULE A PROGRAM, CONTACT:

**SAPET**  
Sexual Assault Peer Edu Team  
253-535-8759  
sapet@plu.edu  
www.plu.edu/~womencen

**Men Against Violence Program**  
Jonathan Grove, Coordinator  
253-538-6304  
grovejk@plu.edu  
www.plu.edu/~mav

#### IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE, CONTACT:

**Voices Against Violence Program**  
Jennifer Warwick, Victim Advocate  
253-538-6303  
warwicjl@plu.edu  
www.plu.edu/~voices

# **If you know someone who is abusing a boyfriend or girlfriend, here is what you can do to help:**

- Tell your friend very clearly that his or her behavior isn't okay.
- Don't laugh at jokes or make light of talk about abusive behavior.
- If your friend grew up in a violent home, try to get him or her to find a counselor s/he can trust, and offer to go with him/her to meet the counselor.
- Be supportive of your friend's partner. Let him or her know that s/he doesn't deserve to be abused.
- Call a Domestic Violence hotline anonymously to find out what you can do to help your friend stop the abusive behavior, and what you can do to help your friend's partner.
- Get written information on relationship abuse and share it with your friend and your friend's partner.
- Be a role model for healthy relationships by treating your partner and friends with respect.
- Speak up when peers make disrespectful remarks or sexist jokes.
- Call the police if you witness physical violence. In many cases, an abuser can be required to get counseling.