How to Support Someone Who Has Been Accused

Of Sexual or Relationship Violence, Stalking, Sexual Harassment, or Other Gender-Based Discrimination
Focus

HEALTHY WAYS TO SUPPORT SOMEONE AND YOURSELF
Supporting Survivors Series: Pt. 1

Trauma-Informed Approach & 50 First Words

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Introductions

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THEIR EXPERIENCE

What they might be feeling or experiencing
Your Friend May Be Experiencing a Wide Range of Emotional Reactions

1. **Distress or shame** at having potentially caused harm
2. **Confusion or disbelief** if they thought the experience was consensual
3. **Denial, defensiveness, or shifting blame** onto the other person as a method of self-protection
Factors to Consider:

**Your Physical and Emotional Safety**
If you don’t feel safe, ask for help (RF, RD, CST, SARA)

**Social Ostracization/Intracultural Betrayal**
Can impede efforts to ask for/ receive help and learn to prevent harm in the future

**Your Capacity To Support**
Check-in with yourself about your capacity and boundaries as a support person

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1 Gómez, J. (2018)
Thank you for sharing this with me. I am willing to help you with X, but I am not comfortable with Y.

I know it took courage to share this with me, but I am not in a position where I can be your primary support person.

You’ve been leaning on me a lot and I want to see you get the support you need. Can we identify some other friends or resources you might turn to?
02 SUPPORT
Healthy ways to support
You may be experiencing a range of emotions such as helplessness, anger, confusion, concern, or betrayal.
What Can You Do?

Refer to Resources
CST, CAPS, SARA Team, RFs, RDs

Get Educated
On relevant issues through sara.stanford.edu

Listen to Them
In a non-judgmental manner

Familiarize Yourself With Policies
Stanford Admin Guide 1.7.1 Sexual Harassment (covers all forms of sexual misconduct)

Consider Counseling
To help you process any emotions and trauma
HELPFUL PHRASES TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO TALK

- What would be helpful for us to talk about?
- How do you feel about that?
- Tell me more about _____
- What do you want to do?
- Thank you for sharing this with me. I can tell this is hard to talk about.
- Let’s talk about how you can get the support you might need moving forward.
03 WHAT NOT TO DO

Behaviors to avoid when supporting
Navigating your response can be difficult and confusing.

There are some actions that should be avoided when providing support.
REMEMBER, BEING A FRIEND **DOES NOT MEAN:**

- Approving all of your friend’s actions or choices
- Taking action into your own hands against involved parties
- Being the right person to offer them support
If you have reporting responsibilities,

Be sure to review your requirements and disclose your **non-confidential role** to your friend prior to any conversation that could require reporting.
AVOID SHARING YOUR FRIEND’S STORY WITH OTHERS

Respect the privacy and confidentiality of everyone involved

If you are struggling with the disclosure, please contact your Residential Education Deans (RDs) or confidential resources such as the Confidential Support Team (CST)
04 Advice on “Advice”

Why you shouldn’t give advice
Avoid giving advice!

Advice can be *unhelpful* and *harmful* because it gives less agency to your friend and tends to be uninformed about:

- **The entirety of the situation.** Remember, you’ve only heard one side.
- **Processes or changes in policies within the criminal justice or Title IX systems**
- **Your friend’s background and any cultural or institutional barriers they are facing**
- **What your friend might be concerned about**
IF ANY ADVICE IS GIVEN, MAKE SURE YOU KNOW WHY YOU ARE GIVING THE ADVICE.

Ask Yourself:

- Are you aiming for specific outcomes?
- Are they your intended outcomes or your friend’s intended outcomes?
- Could this advice cause anyone additional harm?
  - Be mindful of how your actions could impact the survivor, others involved, or the community at large
05 Self-Care

Why self-care for supporters is important
You need to prioritize taking care of yourself when supporting someone who has been accused of causing harm!
Give yourself time and space to process and reflect
Know your limitations and share these clearly with your friend
Seek support yourself
Engage in self-care and self-soothing activities
Providing support to a friend who has been accused can be a difficult process to navigate, but getting educated is a critical step in becoming a better support person.
To continue your learning, there are a variety of SARA videos you can watch on our website or visit sara.stanford.edu/learn-more.
SARA Team
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Confidential Support Team
CST 24/7 Hotline: (650)-725-9955
CST Business Line: (650)-736-6933
vaden.stanford.edu/cst

Residence Education Deans
Business Line: (650)-725-2800
After Hours: (650)-723-2300
Thank You!