

HOW YOU CAN HELP: DOS AND DON'TS

- ◆ Do believe your friend. People rarely lie about rape or assault.
- ◆ Do listen to your friend and concentrate on understanding her or his feelings.
- ◆ Do allow your friend to be silent; you don't have to talk every time he or she stops talking.
- ◆ Do allow your friend know that you understand her or his feelings. For example, you might say, "You must have been very frightened."
- ◆ Do ask how you can help.
- ◆ Do offer to accompany your friend in seeking medical attention or counseling or in going to police.
- ◆ Do help your friend regain a sense of control. Support him or her in making decisions about whom to tell and help to proceed.
- ◆ Do remind your friend that rape is the rapist's fault, not the victim's.
- ◆ Do offer shelter or companionship so that your friend doesn't have to be alone.
- ◆ Do help your friend learn about, recognize, and seek treatment for signs of rape trauma syndrome.
- ◆ Don't ask questions that imply that the rape was your friend's fault, such as "Why did you go to his room?" "Why didn't you scream?" "Why didn't you run away?"
- ◆ Don't touch or hug your friend unless you're sure your friend is comfortable with physical contact.
- ◆ Don't act in ways that are upsetting to your friend. Be wary of phrases like "If I could find the creep, I'd kill him." Although you may be trying to be supportive, that type of comment might upset your friend even more.
- ◆ Don't tell anyone about the assault without your friend's permission.
- ◆ Don't tell your friend what to do; rather, help her or him explore the options. Among the complex decisions your friend will have to make are whether to report the assault to the police and whether to press charges. Rape crisis counselors and the judicial administrator can be helpful in discussing the options.

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