

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you want to help your friend or relative in concrete ways, be creative, but recognize your limitations. Do not offer more than you can give. Any assistance, however small it seems to you, will demonstrate your concern and care. Your care and help can aid your friend or relative's recovery and healthy adjustment.

GOING OUT

Sometimes the daily routines of life will be threatening to someone dealing with the aftermath of rape. Traveling home late from work or an evening class or even grocery shopping may be frightening. If your friend or relative expresses concern about safety in these situations, you might offer to drive her or him home or accompany them on public transportation.

DOMESTIC CONCERNS

For some time after her attack, routine chores and responsibilities may seem burdensome to your friend or relative. They may be grateful for assistance with errands, child care, laundry, etc. To the extent that you are able, offer to help with these tasks and be prepared to follow through.

HOME SECURITY

Regardless of where they were raped, the victim will probably be concerned about the safety of their house or apartment. If they would like, you can help install locks on the doors and windows, or help with other security measures they want to take. They may decide to move to a new apartment or house. You can help search for one or assist with the moving chores.

NEED TO GET AWAY

Depending upon the circumstances of the attack, your friend or relative may appreciate having a place to stay for awhile outside her home. Alternatively, they may appreciate having a companion stay with her in their home. For those who have been raped, fear is a predominant emotion for a considerable time afterwards. It can surface any time - especially when they are feeling vulnerable. It may intensify when they are alone.

Consider making your home available as a temporary refuge. Or consider spending a few days at his or her home. If your family or other responsibilities prevent you from making this kind of commitment, you might offer to arrange a schedule of regular phone calls.

Note: Keep in mind that sheltering the victim or offering assistance is a serious responsibility. Their pain will be closer to you as you take on the role of comforter. Make sure you are prepared to make a commitment of this nature before offering. Knowing and respecting your own limitations is important.

FINANCIAL CONCERNS

For many, rape has considerable financial consequences. The victim might not receive compensation for time lost from work, whether immediately after the attack or later, during the trial. They may incur the expense of moving to a new home, or making other lifestyle changes that increase living expenses. Do not assume that an offer of financial help from you would seem insensitive. They may be eligible for financial assistance from the MN Crime Victims Reparations Board (1-888-622-8799).

PROFESSIONAL HELP

Make sure that your friend knows that there are community resources one can contact for support. If they seem interested, offer to help get information. They or you can call 251-4357 or 1-800-237-5090 for information or referrals. All services at the Center are free and confidential.

If they choose to seek counseling or therapy from a psychologist or psychiatrist, they should be aware that not all of them have had training in the special needs of rape victims. You might offer to help do some screening of potential therapists by calling and asking them if their areas of expertise include counseling for rape victims. If you do help with the screening, present them with the options and then let them decide. Resist the temptation to choose for them. They need to make their own decisions and have control over their own life.

GOING TO COURT

If the attacker is caught and prosecuted, your support will be most important. There is likely to be some contact with a county attorney as well as one or more hearing and trial dates. They may have to go to court. At any point throughout the court processes, consider offering to accompany them. Perhaps you could organize a few other friends who would be willing to rotate the responsibility. This would enable them to have support, but would not tax any one person unduly.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you are feeling frustrated because you aren't able to help as much as you'd like, consider getting help for yourself. Most sexual assault centers work with secondary victims/concerned persons. You may want to become more involved with promoting sexual violence prevention in your schools and organizations, and becoming active in lobbying for funding and laws which promote the reduction of sexual violence. This is a constructive way of showing your friend the depth of your concern and anger on her or his behalf. Contact the Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center at 320-251-4357 or 1-800-237-5090 for more information.

PERSONAL SUPPORT

Accept the fact that after the crisis seems to have passed and in your judgment it seems that things should be getting back to normal, your friend or relative may still be having difficulty adjusting. They may need to talk about their feelings long after you have lost interest in listening. They may still feel traumatized even though, from your perspective, they should be fully recovered or functional. Keep in mind that the psychological after-effects can last for years.