

Rape is a sexual crime of violence, which affects both women and men. This pamphlet is designed specifically to assist female victims of sexual assault.

Above all a woman needs two things:

- to be listened to
- to decide herself how to deal with the assault

The important thing is for her to regain a sense of control over her life since the assault may have left her feeling powerless.

To Be Believed

This may appear to be basic but it is often the case that the woman is not believed, or is questioned in a blaming or accusatory way.

To Be Listened To

Don't make assumptions about what has happened to the woman or how she feels about it. Let her tell you in her own words about her experience.

Women Need To Feel Safe After The Assault

This may include giving them privacy, a place to sit out of public view, company if this is what they want, assistance to find safe accommodation.

A Non-Judgemental Attitude

Do not ask "why" questions. It is important to remember – no woman ever deserves to be raped.

Understanding Of Their Trauma

It is important to understand sexual assault as a life-threatening experience. The woman's trauma is often not related to physical injury but to the threat of violence.

To Be In Control Of What Is Happening

Let the woman make choices where possible. It is important that she begins to regain control over her life.

Permission To Talk About The Attack At Her Own Pace

Do not pressure the woman to tell you everything. She may not wish to discuss what happened at all. She may wish to talk to someone else.

Information About:

- common reactions to sexual assault so that she doesn't feel like she is going crazy
- the legal system and her choices

information about her physical well-being eg the availability of medical care

Encourage

Encouragement to accept help and support, as she may minimise her feelings about the rape or think that she doesn't deserve any assistance.

To Be Supported

Sexual violence is an act of power. The issue is that she has been violated, and she needs your support.

Validation Of Her Experience And Reactions

Women who are raped are likely to experience a range of feelings. These feelings may take a while to deal with. It is important to know that women who have experienced attempted sexual assault experience emotional reactions similar to those who have actually been raped.

Supporting a woman who has been sexually assaulted

Yarrow Place Services

A range of counselling and medical services which may be accessed according to individual need:

- 24 hour crisis response for recent assault which can include counselling and/or medical
- Counselling support for recent victims of rape
- Long term counselling if requested or required
- Support for those close to the survivor of rape and sexual assault is very important for healing. Support persons such as family members, partners and friends are offered a limited number of counselling sessions at Yarrow Place. This provides an opportunity for support people to express their reactions to what happened, to explore coping strategies and to discuss how to support the survivor.
- Specialised medical care and follow-up
- Collection of forensic evidence as requested by those people who have made, or may wish to make, a complaint to police
- Group programs offered throughout the year
- Education, training and consultation for workers
- Community Education to increase knowledge and awareness

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