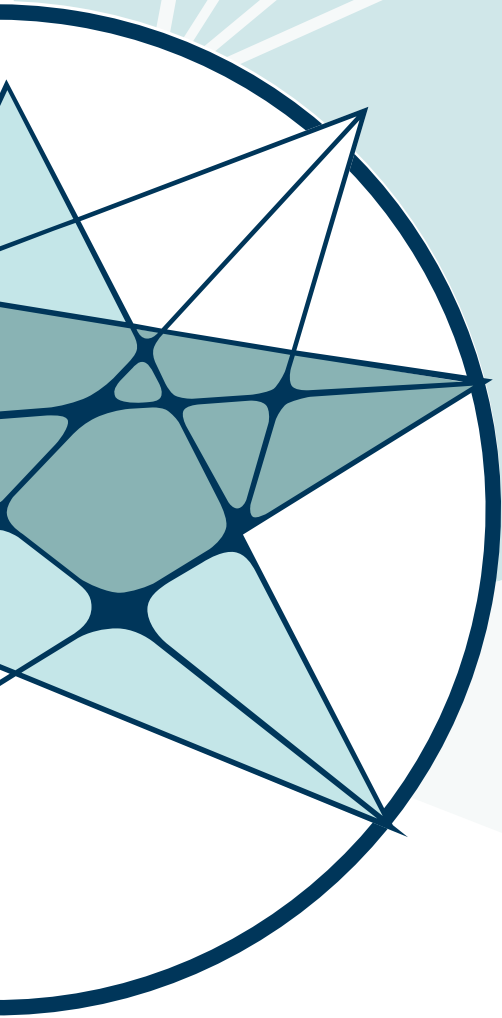


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ALLIES' GUIDE

A resource designed by survivors and allies to encourage thoughtful, empathetic, and effective support of survivors of sexual assault. For more information about Callisto, please visit projectcallisto.org.



WHAT'S INSIDE

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YOUR ROLE AS AN ALLY: INTRODUCTION

Allies play an instrumental role in supporting survivors of sexual assault as survivors navigate the healing process. There are a variety of paths to healing; obtaining justice through reporting is just one. The healing process is an individual journey, based on each survivor's unique circumstances and needs. If you've sought out this guide, you may know someone who has experienced sexual violence and you're looking for ways to support them. You're in the right place.

Callisto supports survivors and allies to bridge the gaps in the healing process by providing navigation tools and resources. This guide is by no means an all-encompassing resource for allies.

Every survivor is different. Recognizing the individuality in their experiences is critical to support and empower survivors. Our intention is that this Allies Guide will help you think about the ways you can support the survivors in your life.

Given the prevalence of sexual assault across our campus communities, we have the responsibility to support survivors to amplify their own voice and experiences on their terms to ensure they are being advocated for and heard.

PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

3x

College-aged women (18-24) are 3 times more likely than non-students to experience sexual violence¹.

78%

Male college-aged students (18-24) are 78% more likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of rape or sexual assault².

23%

23% of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming) college students have been sexually assaulted during their college tenure³.

1. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rape and Sexual Victimization Among College-Aged Females, 1995-2013 (2014).
2. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rape and Sexual Victimization Among College-Aged Females, 1995-2013 (2014).
3. David Cantor, Bonnie Fisher, Susan Chibnall, Reanna Townsend, et. al. Association of American Universities (AAU), Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct (January 17, 2020).

WHEN SOMEONE DISCLOSES SEXUAL ASSAULT TO YOU

Survivors put an immense amount of trust in allies when they disclose their experiences, and it's important to provide a judgement-free space to listen and take in what they share. Whether or not you have experienced sexual violence or harassment yourself, we can all work to be informed about how best to respond to acts of sexual harm.

It may be startling to see someone you care about responding to trauma, but the initial step to being an empathetic ally is to try to understand the survivor experience.

FIGHT

Survivors are often expected to try to physically fight back against an assailant. While some survivors do use tactics like kicking, punching or yelling to try to stop an offender, fighting is the least common reaction to an assault. Because many survivors know their perpetrator, they may not initially be alarmed or think to react with violence. In the midst of an assault, a survivor may not have the physical strength to fight, or may fear that fighting could put them in additional danger. The fight response may also show up as an aggressive response to anything that creates a reminder of the sexual violence. Fight is often a self-protective adaptation to feelings associated with trauma.

FAWN

During an assault, a survivor may look for ways to appease the offender to avoid conflict or further harm. This response is most prevalent in situations where there is a long-term intimate partnership or sustained relationship with the offender, or if the offender has power over the survivor in the moment, or long-term. Adapting and trying to accommodate a person causing harm is not giving in, it is a way to avoid punishment, abandonment, or more

violence. Long term, survivors may feel a loss of their sense of self as a result.

FLIGHT

We all have a natural inclination to remove ourselves from uncomfortable or scary situations. Fearing for your safety and life can be a catalyst for seeking an escape route. Sometimes this escape route is literally leaving, but this may not be possible or safe in all situations. Some survivors flee through dissociation, or "blocking out" their thoughts, feelings and actions during the assault. After an assault, fleeing can take many forms, including checking out emotionally, overachieving, staying busier than usual, or using substances as an escape.

FREEZE

Freezing may include an inability to move, speak, or act. It can cause a feeling of not being able to think rationally, or one of hyper-vigilance. Freezing does not mean that consent was given. It is a normal, involuntary physiological response to a threat. Survivors may also find that this response leads to disruption in concentration and focus, as well as feeling foggy due to the trauma.

AND REMEMBER

Every survivor's experience and response to assault is different and deserves to be validated. No matter what combination of responses a survivor has during or after experiences of sexual violence, it is a natural reaction to an extreme amount of stress, not an overreaction. To learn more about the range of trauma responses, check out the guide at herstory.global, an informational website for survivors.

If someone discloses and confides in you about their experience with sexual or gender-based violence, it is an extremely important step towards healing. **Survivors risk retraumatization, disbelief, and betrayal every time they open up about their experiences, and this only further contributes to a culture of silence that feeds and sustains rape culture. As an ally, you have the opportunity to meet the survivor with compassion and allow them to share what they choose.**

Each survivor's experience and response to assault is different and deserves to be validated.

WHAT TO SAY

(And More Importantly,
When To Listen)

Sometimes it's difficult to know what to say when a survivor discloses their assault to you. As much as we'd like to have the perfect thing to say to make it right, the truth is that there is no single correct thing we can say (or do) to repair their trauma. You can, however, respond in ways that are supportive and empowering to help in their healing process.

HERE ARE SOME SUPPORTIVE PHRASES THAT YOU MIGHT USE

You are not to blame for what happened to you.

It's not your fault.

You didn't deserve what happened to you.

I am here for you and support you in your healing journey.

Please share as much or as little as you like, I am here when you are ready to talk.

Instead of asking, "What can I do to support you?", ask something specific like, "Can I bring you dinner sometime?", "Want to watch a movie tonight?" Offer specific things and give them the agency to say yes or no.

It is possible to find safety and support again in order to heal. You can explore that when you are ready.

You are not alone.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT MAY HELP BRIDGE THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

There is no shame in struggling to find the best way to help someone that has disclosed an assault to you. The recommendations that follow are by no means comprehensive and we hope it isn't the only resource you consider as you engage in the constant learning process of becoming a better ally.

BELIEVE AND AFFIRM WHAT THE SURVIVOR HAS TOLD YOU.

ALWAYS emphasize that what happened was NOT their fault and they could not have done ANYTHING to prevent this. One of the most common reactions to sexual violence is for the survivor to assume they should have done something to prevent it. It's critical that we help survivors understand that offenders commit sexual violence to take away another's agency. Survivors are not responsible or to blame in any way, shape, or form.

CHECK FOR SAFETY.

Ask about their immediate needs, specifically if they may be in any immediate danger. Let the survivor set the agenda and name priorities.



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HOW TO HELP

MAKE IT CLEAR YOU ARE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT IT WITH THEM IF THEY WANT TO, BUT NOT UNTIL THEN.

Don't try and pressure the survivor into saying anything if they don't want to. Every survivor operates on their own timeline. There is no "right" timeline for beginning to talk about what happened.

FOLLOW THEIR LEAD.

Disclosing an assault or abuse to anyone, especially someone you care about, can be extremely difficult—follow the survivors' lead in setting tone, helping uncover resources, and, most importantly, verbally uplifting them. Be careful of jumping into problem-solving or giving advice. Allow time for the survivor to share their experience without interrupting. Remember you do not need to rescue or fix it for them.

YOU ARE THERE TO LISTEN AND BELIEVE THEM, NOT TO INTERROGATE.

If you have questions, consider how you can ask them in a judgement-free space. In the same vein, be conscious of the questions you're asking and try to not ask questions that are more invasive than the survivor may be comfortable with. Though hearing an incident of sexual violence can often be shocking as an ally, it's important you try to keep any immediate feelings of shock to yourself. Phrases like, "really?" or, "are you serious?" are natural responses, but can be extremely damaging and make survivors second guess their experience. Instead, you might say, "I am so sorry that this happened to you" or, "Thank you for trusting me to talk about this horrible experience."

MORE WAYS TO HELP

OFFER WHATEVER HELP WOULD BE MOST BENEFICIAL FOR THE SURVIVOR, NOT WHAT YOU MAY THINK WOULD BENEFIT THEM.

It can be challenging not to center your personal feelings, but it's important to do so in order to best support the survivor. For example, some survivors may confide in you because they want help navigating reporting options, but others may not feel comfortable going through any formal process. Be sure to listen to whatever they most want their path forward to look like. Allow the survivor to make the decisions.

TRY NOT TO COMPARE YOUR EXPERIENCES TO THEIRS.

If you are also a survivor and are comfortable sharing that, feel free to do so. But, remember that this conversation is about them and every experience of assault is unique. Each survivor experiences sexual violence in the context of their own identities, experiences, and circumstances. It is important to refrain from assuming we can fully understand the way someone might be navigating their lived experiences, especially when it also includes systems of oppression that further harm and silence survivors. We know repeat perpetrators are a serious problem, but that shouldn't be a reason to pressure a survivor into taking an action they don't want to take. It is most important that a survivor feels listened to and supported. Their path to healing is completely their choice, and is unique to every survivor.

LANGUAGE TO USE

USE COMPASSIONATE LANGUAGE THAT ALLOWS THE SURVIVOR TO LEAD THE CONVERSATION.

Saying things like “I think you need to report this immediately” may be coming from a place of support, but can provide overwhelming pressure to the survivor to take actions they may not be comfortable with. As angry or upset as you may be that this happened to someone you care about, you are not there to “fix” the situation through things like making a plan of action on their behalf. The best you can do is to help the survivor move forward in whatever form that looks like for them. Conversely, urging the survivor not to take any action can invalidate their experience and minimize the survivor’s feelings and the reality of the assault itself.

IF YOU’RE EVER UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT TO SAY, JUST LISTEN.

Being present and being an empathetic and understanding audience is the best way to show support.. Listening is an act that shows the survivor that they are not alone. Safe connections, even if it’s not directly talking about the sexual violence can assist in giving relief and regulation to someone experiencing trauma.

RECOGNIZE AND APPLAUD THEIR STRENGTH IN THE ROAD TO HEALING, ACKNOWLEDGING THE HARDSHIPS THAT COME WITH THIS JOURNEY.

Be conscious that the person sharing this information with you is probably being very intentional about what they are saying and not saying. Allow them to maintain control of the conversation and share what they feel comfortable with.

KEEP YOURSELF GROUNDED

Sexual assault can feel like a total loss of control. In the wake of an assault, returning agency to survivors is critical. Every survivor has the right to remain in control of what happens next.

Listening to a disclosure can be painful and difficult. It is important that you as an ally also remember to take care of yourself. Prioritize your self-care and community care needs after a disclosure to ensure that you can continue extending support as an ally. Giving yourself compassion and finding support for yourself is vital, while maintaining privacy for what the survivor disclosed to you. Always avoid disclosing identifying information about what a survivor confided in you as an ally to others unless it is at the clear directive of the survivor.

It's important to note this guide is not exhaustive or perfectly catered to what every survivor expects or wants from allies. Material to create this guide was sourced from a variety of existing resources that highlight valuable ways to support intersectional survivors cited under the additional information section at the bottom of the guide. It was also created by and with the input of campus survivor advocates at Callisto who specialize in serving as peer allies on campuses as well as professionals that work daily with survivors.

Most importantly, this guide is written by both survivors and allies, acting not just from professional experience and training, but from personal experience as well. If you have an edit or alteration you'd like to suggest be made to the Allies' Guide, email us at contact@projectcallisto.org.

A special thanks to Lauren Trihy, Maia Brockbank, and Tiombe Wallace, MS, MFT for their work to bring this guide to fruition.



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RESOURCES

RAINN HOTLINE

800-656-4673

rainn.org

IT'S ON US

itsonus.org

END RAPE ON CAMPUS

civcnation.org

KNOW YOUR IX

knowyourix.org

YWCA

ywca.org

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY OF WOMEN

aauw.org

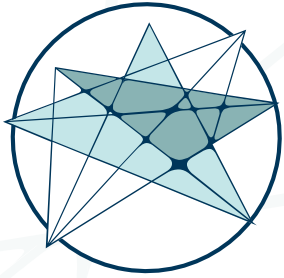
NATIONAL ALLIANCE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

ncadv.org

GET INVOLVED

HOW TO GET INVOLVED IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

There is lots of amazing work being done both federally and across states, cities, and colleges to combat sexual violence on campuses through political advocacy, prevention, education, survivor services, and more. If you are looking to get involved in this movement, here are some (but by no means all!) of the organizations that lead in some of these efforts at the national level and in localized chapters.




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Thank you for your continued support. If you would like to get involved with Callisto, please visit projectcallisto.org for information on how to donate, volunteer, or partner with us.

We encourage you to share this guide with loved ones, peers, colleagues, and friends.

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