

A Guide for Parents

Knowing that your child has been hurt in some way can be a difficult experience for parents in terms of both processing it personally and responding to and helping your child. Often children worry that telling a parent will traumatize their parent. Expressing care and concern, and offering your support is a great place to start.

HOW TO RESPOND

Listen and demonstrate that you believe your child. A conversation about your child experiencing harm is likely to be difficult for both you and your child. It is important that your child feels believed, no matter what the circumstances.

Let your child lead the conversation. Allow your child to determine how the conversation unfolds. Try to avoid asking many questions or pressing for details. Understand your child's need for privacy. Experiencing sexual assault or harassment is often a disempowering experience and it is important that your child feels empowered to make the choices and decisions that feel right to her or him and not feel pressured to explain or do something that feels uncomfortable.

Assure your child that what happened is not her or his fault. People tend to blame themselves, but no one asks to be harmed or assaulted.

Allow your child to cope and to heal in her or his own way and time.

Encourage your child to get support. There are professional resources on campus that can assist your child by offering counseling, medical care, legal follow up and disciplinary resolutions.

HOW YOUR CHILD MAY REACT TO ASSAULT

There is no right or wrong way to respond to assault. Everyone responds in their own way. Reactions that seem confusing may be ways your child is trying to make sense of the event; to re-establish a sense of safety; or to regain mastery over their environment. Your child may have heightened responses to stimuli or experience mood changes such as anxiety or depression. These reactions are all normal responses to frightening or traumatic events. These responses may impact many areas of your child's life, including personal, academic and social. It is important to demonstrate patience and understanding and to refrain from judgment.

Call 911 to get immediate help if your child talks of hurting herself or himself, or another.



HELPING YOURSELF

Be aware of your own feelings. Anger, fear, helplessness and loss of control are very normal reactions to your child's hurt. Many offenders are acquaintances and may be someone you know. You may wish for revenge or confrontation. Understand that acting on those wishes will not be helpful to your child.

Remember that you are not responsible for your child's experience. You may think you could have done something to prevent this. The person who is responsible is the offender.

Seek Support for Yourself. Find someone other than your child to talk to about your feelings. There are resources in the community, and SHARE is available to you, too.

RESOURCES

SHARE

SHARE is completely confidential and can be anonymous, and is available for support 24/7. No issue is too large or too small.

203.432.2000

ShareCenter.Yale.edu

Yale University Chaplain's Office

The Chaplain's Office welcomes and supports people of all religious and spiritual traditions.

203.432.1128

Chaplain.Yale.edu

The Office of LGBTQ Resources

The Yale Office of LGBTQ Resources offers support to parents of LGBTQ students.

203.432.0309

LGBTQ.Yale.edu

New Haven Sexual Assault Crisis Services Women and Families Center

The WFC offers support services and support groups for survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones. Confidential and available 24/7.

1.888.999.5545 (English) 1.888.568.8332 (En Espanol)

The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services

Provides confidential services for those who experience domestic or intimate partner violence. Available 24/7.

1.888.774.2900