

HOW TO HELP:

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Below are some vital tips on how to be an active listener and provide support when approached by a student who is affected by an incident sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking:

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR ROLE

- Be honest and direct about the level of confidentiality you can provide before the student shares their experience.
- Only answer questions you are comfortable with and qualified to answer. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know, but I know how to find help."

PROVIDE A SAFE, COMFORTABLE SETTING

- Avoid distractions such as a loud hallway.
- Stop all non-relevant activities and stay focused on the speaker.
- Respect personal space issues and do not touch the person without asking permission.
- Give the speaker time and space while they are talking.

LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT

- Accept what you hear without judgment, and avoid "why" questions which imply blame.
- Believe the person. Regardless of who is involved, it is important the incident is taken seriously and not minimized.
- Allow the person to take ownership of his or her feelings, regardless of what they are.

OFFER COMFORT AND SUPPORT

- Validate the person's experience by making gentle, clear, & empathetic statements. Here are some useful validating statements:
 - "I am sorry this happened to you."
 - "I am glad you felt comfortable sharing this with me."
- Do not tell them what to do or how to act.
- Be clear on the availability of resources and what they provide.
- Remain calm and reassuring and maintain your own emotional composure.
- If the person is overwhelmed or agitated, suggest they take a few deep breaths.

CHECK WHETHER YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD

- Summarize key points to affirm your understanding & confirm the next steps you will take.
- Non-verbally acknowledge points while they are speaking.

- Ask them what they need in that moment and allow them to be in control of next steps.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Hearing about traumatic experiences can affect you too. Utilize campus resources such as the Penn Women’s Center (215-898-8611), and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (1-888-321-4433).
- If you are not sure what to do or say to someone, reach out to a support person for some advice and support.
- Be clear about what you are comfortable and not comfortable doing.

RESOURCES ON CAMPUS

Penn offers a wealth of resources to respond to and support victims of abuse and assault.

Emergency Resources (on call 24/7):

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)	215-898-7021
Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS)	215-898-6600
Student Intervention Services (SIS)	215-898-6081

Reporting Resources:

Sexual Violence Investigative Officer (SVIO)	215-898-2887
Office of Affirmative Action/Title IX Coordinator	215-898-6993

Confidential Support and Referral Resources:

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)	215-898-7021
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Center	215-898-5044
Office of the Chaplain	215-898-8456
Office of the Ombuds	215-898-8261
Penn Women’s Center (PWC)	215-898-8611
Student Health Service (SHS)	215-746-3535
Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS)	215-898-6600
Penn Violence Prevention	215-746-2642