

**YWCA IS ON
A MISSION**

Helpful Hints Tool Guide

***For a Supportive Family or
Friend of a Victim of
Sexual Assault***

ywca of hawaii island

**1382 Kilauea Avenue
Hilo, HI 96720**

Business Line: 808.961.3877

**24 Hour Crisis Line:
808.935.0677**

www.ywcahawaiiisland.org

Ways to Help a Victim of Sexual Assault

Sexual Assault is very disruptive to a persons sense of safety, well-being and confidence. It is important for the survivors healing that they receive support and understanding. You can help in the following ways:

- Connect with a counselor who specializes in recovery from sexual assault. The YWCA of Hawaii Island's Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) Program has therapists that can help you with this. This support would be beneficial for the whole family. (See reference page for contact information)
- Since sexual assault is an out of control experience, you can help the survivor regain a sense of control by giving them the power to make both important and unimportant choices for themselves. The survivor should be in control of who is going to be told what happened and how.
- Let the survivor know you love and care about them, and that they are safe. Discussions about making good decisions and trust can take place later.
- Don't force the survivor to talk about what happened or ask for details and specifics. Allow them to talk when they are ready. Listen, be there, and don't be judgmental.

Ways to Help a Victim of Sexual Assault

- The survivor is likely going to be more sensitive over the next few weeks. After an assault, most victims report that they feel everyone is looking at them funny or saying things about them. Listen to their feelings and be supportive.
- The survivor may experience mood swings over the next few weeks. S/he may lose their appetite and have trouble sleeping. Sexual assault creates a circus image mirror that blows up negatives and makes positive messages faint.
- Exaggerate your expressions of love without coming off sarcastic. Even though they may hide it all, survivors hunger for the approval and support of their loved ones.



Ways to Help a Victim of Sexual Assault

- It is rare for victims of sexual assault to not be overwhelmed by self blame... 'If only I had' or 'If only I hadn't'... The survivor will need you to reassure them over and over, that no matter what they were doing they didn't deserve to be sexually assaulted.
- Validate them and remind them that it was not their fault.
- Symptoms commonly experienced after sexual assault include general numbness, being very anxious, and being consumed with what happened. These symptoms lessen with time, but can feel overwhelming and crazy when present.
- Take care of yourself. Survivors are often very aware of the pain of their loved ones. You both can learn a lot about coping and self care, by watching each other.
- You will have a natural desire to protect your loved ones. Try to avoid being overly protective – this will only reinforce their fear that the world is an unsafe place and will cause the survivor to lose the ability to make good decisions for themselves.

Ways to Help a Survivor of

For School Aged Survivors:

- The survivor may need a few days off from school to regain their physical and emotional strength.
- If the other students know what happened or the assailant was someone from school, meet with the school counselor to develop a plan of support.
- Your child should have someone designated as a support person that they can go to if they need to leave a class.
- Subjects like math or language, which include memorization skills will be the most difficult.
- Don't let teachers say that the child is just being lazy, coping with sexual assault takes a lot of energy, and it can be very exhausting.



In Closing...

Sexual Assault, while a horrible and violent experience, does not have to define ones life. This can be a time for the survivor to discover/ remember their strength and learn how to cope with adversity. Many people have made positive changes in their lives after experiencing a sexual assault. The survivor doesn't have control over the fact that this happened, but they have control over their own healing.



Reference Guide

**Hilo (East Hawaii):
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**Kona (West Hawaii):
75-5706 Hanama Place, #202
Kailua Kona, HI 96740
Business Line: 808.334.1624**

**24 Hour Crisis Line:
8080.935.0677**

Credit:

<http://www.sptsusa.org/you-are-not-alone/> - You are not Alone image
<http://jenmurphyfitness.com/survivor/> - Survivor Image



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to beat the odds, one with great courage and strength, a true inspiration