

"I feel so awkward talking about something so personal, but I know ... (he/she) needs my support."

Your friend or family member may need help and support in redeveloping trust in the world around them. Building a new sense of trust and safety is one of the most difficult steps in recovering from sexual assault.

Their reaction to the sexual assault may be strong enough to lead to difficulties in your relationship. You may feel hurt and upset by the newfound distrust or detachment from you and angry that this situation has occurred at all. Try to be patient and gentle and understanding as ... (he/she) struggles to come to terms with the assault. Remember in addition to "losing trust" they also lose their "sense of control." It is important to support ... (his/her) efforts to make changes and help to find the resources needed to cope with the experience.

It is important to take care of yourself as well during this difficult time. You may find it helpful to talk to a counselor about your feelings.

## For additional support and information or to discuss counselling, contact:

Thunder Bay Sexual Assault/ Sexual Abuse  
Counselling and Crisis Centre (807) 345-0894

Beendigen 344-9579

Catholic Family Development Centre 345-7323

Thunder Bay Counseling 684-1880

Employee Assistance Program through your employer

## Additional Resource:

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board  
[www.cicb.gov.on.ca](http://www.cicb.gov.on.ca)  
1(416) 326-2900 or 1 (800) 372-7463

[www.sadvtreatmentcentres.net](http://www.sadvtreatmentcentres.net)

Together with the community we are  
helping to build sustainable self reliance.  
Educating, advocating and leading the  
way to social change.

We can help...  
Call (807) 684-6751



980 Oliver Road  
Thunder Bay, Ontario,  
Canada P7B 6V4  
(807) 684-6000

This is a program of the Thunder Bay Regional Health  
Sciences Centre, also affiliated with the Ontario Network  
for Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres.



## Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centre

### Caring For A Friend Or Family Member Following Sexual Assault

A continuum of services inspired by the strength  
and resiliency of survivors.

Rebuilding lives.  
Restoring hope.  
Reviving the human spirit.



[www.tbrhsc.net](http://www.tbrhsc.net)

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healthy  
together

## Caring For A Friend Or Family Member Following Sexual Assault

"I feel so helpless because I wasn't able to protect ... (him/her).  
I feel like I have let them down."

You may experience some powerful emotions when you learn that someone close to you has been sexually assaulted.

You may feel anger and sadness that this has happened to someone you care about.

You may feel guilt that you were not able to do something to prevent the assault and you may feel confusion about what you can do to help.

"I want to help, but I don't know what to do or say. I'm afraid of making it worse."

It is important for you to understand that a person who has been sexually assaulted may experience some or all of the following reactions:

- A feeling of being isolated and alone and out of touch with the rest of the world
- A belief that no one understands what they are experiencing
- Confusion or an inability to think clearly or to concentrate
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea, stomach aches, loss of appetite, fatigue
- Changes in sleeping patterns and experiencing nightmares
- A feeling of being dirty
- A sense of grief and loss
- Emotional reactions such as shame, guilt, anger, rage, fear
- Not being able to stop thinking about the assault
- Feeling responsible for the assault
- A change in the way they feel about sex
- An unwillingness to be touched by anyone
- Difficulty in trusting others
- Feeling unsafe when alone
- Feeling nervous and anxious
- A lack of self-confidence

### You can assist by:

- Believing ... (him/her)
- Listening and allowing ... (him/her) the opportunity to talk about the event in their own time and in their own way
- Not judging ... (him/her)
- Spending time with them
- Allowing them some private time
- Reassuring them they are safe
- Allowing them the opportunity to express their feelings
- Not taking the person's anger and feelings personally
- Assisting with some tasks such as minding the children or cooking, if this is what they want
- Not saying things such as they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People who have experienced a trauma are not consoled by these statements.