



Sexual Assault Response Services

of Southern Maine

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24-Hour Hotline: 1-800-313-9900

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How You Can Help: Dos and Don'ts

- Do believe your friend. People rarely lie about rape or sexual assault.
- Do listen to your friend and concentrate on understanding their feelings.
- Do allow your friend to be silent; you don't have to talk every time they stop talking.
- Do let your friend know that you understand their feelings. For example, you might say, "You must have been very frightened."
- Do ask how you can help.
- Do offer to accompany your friend for medical attention or counseling or in going to the police.
- Do help your friend regain a sense of control. Support them in making decisions about whom to tell and how to proceed.
- Do remind your friend rape is the rapist's fault, not the victim's.
- Do offer shelter or companionship so that your friend doesn't have to be alone.
- Do help your friend learn about, recognize, and seek treatment for signs of rape trauma syndrome.
- Don't ask questions that imply the rape was your friend's fault, such as "Why did you go to his room?", "Why didn't you scream?", or "Why didn't you run away?".
- Don't touch or hug your friend unless you're sure your friend is comfortable with physical contact.
- Don't act in ways that are upsetting to your friend. Be wary of phrases like, "If I could find this creep, I'd kill him." Although you may be trying to be supportive, that type of comment might upset your friend even more.
- Don't tell anyone about the assault without your friend's permission.
- Don't tell your friend what to do; rather, help them explore the options. Among the complex decisions your friend will have to make are whether to report the assault to the police and whether to press charges.

Help, Hope, and Healing