

### Common Feelings of Concerned Persons

- **Confusion** about how to deal with the trauma.
- **Difficulty Understanding** why the violence happened.
- **Concern** for the victim/survivor.
- **Helplessness** from wishing you could have protected the victim/survivor or wanting to do more for them.
- **Guilt and Shame** regarding the reactions of others, or from believing misconceptions about sexual violence.
- **A Loss of Control** is a natural feeling; control will return with time.
- **Anger** geared toward the perpetrator or the systems that don't work.
- **Wanting to Harm the Perpetrator** is a common feeling, but can be counterproductive and may alarm the victim.
- **Frustration** with the legal and law enforcement systems.
- **For romantic partners: Temporary Loss of Intimacy** with the survivor. Sexual activity may bring back memories of the experience, but over time intimacy will return with the help of a nurturing partner.

# Friends and Family

## A Guide for Secondary Victims of Sexual Violence

Friends have the unique opportunity to observe and interact with a victim/survivor and have a sense of trust.

In this trusting position, friends may come to you with issues in their life related to sexual violence, relationship violence, harassment, or stalking. This information will help you to become an advocate for those that are close to you.

**Sexual Violence** is any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's consent. Sexual violence includes completed or attempted sex acts, abusive sexual contact, and non-contact sexual abuse. Some of the most common forms of sexual violence include sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. Consent must be informed, freely and actively given, and mutually understood.

\*Adapted from the CDC's Definition of Sexual Violence

### What Can I Do to Help?

**Listen** to what the victim/survivor says. Do not question or criticize their behavior, but be supportive of what they are sharing with you.

**Believe** what they disclose to you without being judgmental or making assumptions.

**Reassure** the victim/survivor by saying something like, "It's not your fault."

**Offer Options and Empower** the victim/survivor by providing resources and information.

**Support** them with whatever decision they may choose. Avoid making decisions for the victim/survivor.

**Be Patient** since everyone heals from traumatic events differently. Even though the victim/survivor may become withdrawn at times, be sure to let them know they are not alone whenever they need help.

**Start Conversations** with comments like, "You look upset." This shows the victim/survivor that you notice and care about them.

**Get Support** for yourself. It is easy to experience burn-out when helping others. Seek help if you need information or have questions. Aurora Center advocates can help you too.

**Be Comfortable with Silence.** Let the victim/survivor process their thoughts and share what they are thinking.

**The Aurora Center**  
117 Appleby Hall  
Business: 612-626-2929  
24-hr Helpline: 612-626-9111  
www.umn.edu/aurora

### SELF CARE for yourself is important.

Supporting a victim/survivor may be tolling, whether you realize it or not. Taking care of yourself allows you to provide better support for those that you care about. Aurora Center advocates are not just able to support victim/survivors, but also the secondary victims of sexual violence.