



# Responding to a sexual trauma disclosure



*Myths about sexual violence make it hard to be an effective responder.*

*Knowing how to respond is important to be helpful to the person.*

*They have chosen to tell you because they trust you.*

*Hearing someone tell you they've been sexually assaulted or abused can be hard.*

*You can experience different feelings that may cause you to react and respond badly.*

## It's important to:

- **Believe them** and let them know it's not their fault
- Support them in this journey by taking **time to listen**
- **Respect their choice** if they don't want to do anything now
- Support them by letting them know **they have options**, such as going to a doctor, hospital, medical centre, police or counsellor
- **Don't break their trust** by gossiping to others and telling their story

# Receiving a sexual trauma disclosure

## Some examples of what you can say:

- I'm sorry that happened to you. You have every right to feel upset.
- What happened to you is not your fault.
- It will take time to become comfortable again; know I'm here for you.
- What's the most useful thing I can do for you right now?

## Some unhelpful responses:

- Why didn't you scream?
- Why were you walking alone?
- Did you do anything to encourage them?
- Why didn't you fight back?
- They seem alright to me.

These responses can make a person feel judged and blamed. Avoid them.

## Remember

- The abuser is the one responsible for hurting the person you care about. Try focusing on how to support the person.
- Educating yourself on how sexual trauma occurs in our communities and to our people is important for breaking cycles and preventing more harm. Beware of myths or false beliefs because they are not helpful.

## Don't forget

- You might need help yourself while supporting the person you care about. It can be useful to speak to someone who knows about sexual trauma.
- It's also important not to break the trust of the person you're supporting when you do this.



## Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

**Metropolitan area:** A free 24-hr emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault, and counselling services for any form of unwanted sexual contact that has happened in the past for all genders ages 13 years and above.

**Regional area:** Advice and education and training can be provided to services across the state of Western Australia.

Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Email SARC Education and Training on [SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au)

### Yorgum Healing Services

Disability counselling, intensive family support and National Redress services

Call 1800 469 371

### 13 Yarn

The first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, 24hrs/7 days a week

Call 139 276 (13YARN)

### WA Police

To report a sexual assault:  
Go to your local **police station**.  
Call **131 444**  
Go online [Safe2Say.com.au](https://www.safe2say.com.au)

**Non emergencies**  
**Police assistance**  
**and reporting**

**Call 131 444**

**Emergency Call 000** Police, Fire, Ambulance