

## How to Support a Friend or Family Member Who Has Experienced Gender-Based Violence

**Listen.** Let your friend or family member control what and how much information they want to share with you. Digging for every detail can overwhelm or alienate them. Many of us are quick to go into “fix it” mode, assuming our friend or family member is looking to us for solutions. Before making this assumption, you might try asking, “*How can I best support you right now?*” This question centers their needs and allows them to control their healing process.

**Use language that communicates your support** instead of your judgment or frustration. You might try saying, “*I’m worried about you*” instead of “*Why don’t you just leave?*” or “*I can’t believe you put up with that.*”

**Honor their agency.** Despite your best intentions, it is never appropriate to tell your friend or family member that they “need” to make a report, seek therapy, tell their parents or anything else you think is in their best interest. When we tell survivors that they “need” to do something, we are taking away their power, just as their assailant/abuser did. This doesn’t mean you can’t offer resources, but it does mean they should be presented as options not recommendations.

**Express admiration for their courage.** Commend your friend or family member for their resiliency and thank them for confiding in you. If they begin to blame themselves, remind them that the only person who could have prevented the violence from happening is the person who committed the violence. Make sure they know you believe, support, and love them.

**Practice self-care.** Identify your emotional boundaries and acknowledge your limits. You’ll be better able to respond to your friend or family member’s needs, if you’re also taking care of yourself. If you’re feeling frustrated or angry that your friend or family member has stayed with (or returned to) their abuser, seek support from other friends or counselors - while respecting the survivor’s privacy - to help you through this.

### Want to get involved?

- Interested in becoming a VAWPP Peer Facilitator next fall? You’ll first need to enroll in the one credit pre-requisite course being offered this spring - WGSS 3271 Rape Education & Awareness
- Interested in engaging in conversations around masculinity, power and privilege with men on campus? Consider joining Men’s Project. All inquiries should be directed to [mensproject@uconn.edu](mailto:mensproject@uconn.edu)
- Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority on campus interested in challenging cultural norms that promote gender-based violence? Consider joining Greeks Against Sexual Assault. All inquiries should be directed to [gasa@uconn.edu](mailto:gasa@uconn.edu)
- Access our website - <http://womenscenter.uconn.edu/> - to join our mailing list. By subscribing, you will receive a weekly email that includes information about upcoming Women’s Center events, announcements, and national/international news about women

Connect With Us!



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