

## For Teens: Supporting a Friend Who Has Been Sexually Assaulted

- **Believe, listen, and validate.** Assure the survivor that you believe her/him. Allow the survivor to have all of their feelings, but make it clear that s/he is not responsible for the assault. Do not force the survivor to talk about the assault, but let the survivor know you are available.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Do not discuss the assault with friends. Encourage the survivor to talk to a trusted adult, such as a teacher, school counselor, police officer, parent, or a LACASA counselor. Sexual assault has serious consequences and adults can help the survivor to learn about her/his options and how to stay safe.
- **Do not take over.** Following a sexual assault, a survivor may feel like s/he has no control. It is important to help the survivor identify what s/he needs and identify choices. Ask what you could do to be supportive. Give her/him LACASA's phone number and let her/him know that they can get free counseling there. Offer to accompany the survivor to counseling, the police station or emergency room, but do not pressure the survivor to take a specific course of action, unless you feel that medical care is crucial.
- **Don't assume that s/he will want to be hugged or touched.** Always ask the survivor what is most comfortable. Some survivors will not want any physical contact, while others may feel comforted being hugged or held.
- **Every survivor's healing process is unique.** Although survivors are trying to return their lives to "normal," there is no timetable for their healing process. The healing process includes several phases, which may be repeated. Memories and flashbacks of the assault may be triggered at any time. Triggers may include a scent or touch, a visual image, the onset of a new relationship, etc.
- **Recognize your impact on the survivor.** While sharing your feelings and concerns could be supportive, it could also be overwhelming. Survivors may take responsibility for your reactions, such as rage toward the perpetrator. Find ways to take care of your own feelings about the assault. LACASA offers a free support group for friends and family members of sexual assault survivors. Call or further information.
- **Take a break!** Do not over focus your time and energy on the assault. Make time to talk with the survivor about other things. Plan activities unrelated to the assault. Also, be sensitive to the survivor's possible fears and concerns s/he may have about safety. Make sure to stay in touch with your own feelings and needs.

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Abuse impacts on humanity and on society; therefore, LACASA is committed to diversity and to serving all individuals.

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