



Prevention of Harassment, Assault and Sexual Assault (9/22)

Warning Signs of Sexual Violence in teens

- Unusual weight gain or weight loss
- Unhealthy eating patterns
- Signs of physical abuse, such as bruises
- Sexually Transmitted Infections/Diseases
- Signs of depression
- Anxiety or worry
- Failing grades
- Changes in self-care, such as paying less attention to hygiene, appearance, or fashion
- Self-harming behaviors
- Expressing thoughts of suicide or suicidal behavior
- Drinking or drug use
- Mood swings
- Nightmares
- Frequently distracted
- Develops new or unusual fear of certain people or places
- Decline in self-confidence
- Fear of intimacy or closeness

Ways you can help yourself and others:

Bystander Intervention in the presence of sexual violence:

- Create a distraction: It's a subtle and effective way of intervening. It can be used as a way of safely de-escalating a situation. You could start a conversation with someone or ask if they want to run to get food with you, anything that won't leave them alone in danger.
- Ask directly: Ask someone who is at risk if you can help them. Make sure to ask the question when the perpetrator is not listening or nearby in order to de-escalate the situation from turning into a crisis. Simply ask, "Do you need help?" or "Would you like to get out of here and get somewhere safe?"
- Rally others: Confronting a situation alone can be intimidating, so if you need, ask someone to come along to support you or ask someone to go in your place if they know them. There is power in numbers. Sometimes the safest way is to enlist an authority figure. If the situation escalates and involves danger and harm the best technique is to call 911- be prepared to identify yourself, your location, and the nature of the situation.

- Extend support: After experiencing such a situation, the individual at risk may be in shock, and not quite sure how to act. Offering them a helping hand and an empathic ear can make a huge difference. Make sure they feel safe and comfortable with you, and if they ask for resources you can extend contact numbers of student support and advocacy centers, also the National Sexual Assault Hotline(1-800-656-4673). Feel free to use this site as well.

<https://www.rainn.org/articles/practicing-active-bystander-intervention>

Self-care after Trauma

Self-care is about taking steps to feel healthy and comfortable. Whether it happened recently or a while ago, self-care can help you cope with the effects of trauma. Remember your experiences are always valid, it is NOT your fault, and you are not alone.

- Physical self-care: Keep your body healthy and strong, whether it's healing from injuries or you're emotionally drained, good physical health can help support you through these times. Commit to a sleep ritual, do your favorite activities, eat your favorite healthy foods, stick to routines.
- Emotional self-care: This could mean different things to different people. The most important thing is being in tune with yourself. Think about a time you felt balanced and grounded, you could write down your thoughts, meditate, spend time with loved ones, or go to a special place. If you physically or mentally cannot find balance, here is a link that offers some grounding techniques:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques#physical-techniques>

<https://www.rainn.org/sites/default/files/SelfCareOnePageRAINN.pdf>

How to offer support:

- Thank them for telling you: This is important because it acknowledges how difficult it can be to tell someone about their trauma. It shows your appreciation for their trust and may help them feel more comfortable.
- Ask how you can help: Even though you might just want to give them advice, it's important to let them make their own choices about what steps to take. You don't have to have the answers, you just have to listen and let them know that you are there for them.
- Listen without judgment: Give them your undivided attention and focus on their feelings, even if you are angry or upset, keep those emotions within yourself. Use supportive phrases such as, "I am sorry this happened to you." or "I believe you."
- DO NOT: ask if they are absolutely sure it happened, say that it doesn't sound "that bad", ask for details, tell them that they should be over it/get over it, or insist that they have to do certain things.

<https://www.rainn.org/TALK>

Credit given to Washburn High School Students: Ryan Rowell, Abby Peterson, and Paige Selberg (2021)