



RESOURCE GUIDE



I am

I am strong, wonderful, powerful, and capable.

I am worthy, I am deserving, I am open to change.

I am magnificent beyond comprehension.

I have a divine spirit and I can accomplish anything I set my mind to.

I control my thoughts, my mind and my body.

I am a positive light who inspires others.

I believe in myself.

I am more than enough.



Welcome.

This booklet is a resource for anyone who is supporting a loved one who has experienced sexual violence. The Rape Crisis Center's staff and volunteers are here to help. If you have any questions about anything in this booklet, or anything **not** in this booklet, please contact us!



Here's what we want every victim and survivor to know:

1. **We believe you.**
2. **What happened wasn't your fault.**
3. **We want you to make the choices that are right for you.**

Our main goal is to reinforce these three things, in any way we can do that. Our advocates will make sure you have the information you need.

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Important Notes

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is an umbrella term for any unwanted sexual or romantic attention. This could be:

- Physical (touching or being too close)
- Verbal (spoken or written words)
- Visual or auditory (being forced to see or hear gestures, images, or videos)

Sexual violence is *never* caused by the victim. These unwanted interactions hurt them and violate their trust. It's *always* the perpetrator's responsibility.

The motivations for sexual violence can be complicated. They might include sexual entitlement, hate, anger, or a desire for power or control. Perpetrators may use any form of manipulation or coercion, including physical force. Pre-existing power imbalances often make it difficult for victims to resist.

People are more vulnerable to the impact of sexual violence if they come from a marginalized community, or experience social oppression.

When is reporting required?

RCC advocates are not required to make reports of abuse.

Some other professionals are *mandated reporters*. This means that if they hear about any abuse or neglect of a vulnerable person, they may have to report it to authorities. The term "vulnerable person" refers to:

- People under age 18
- Adults who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation **and either**:
 - Have physical or mental conditions that make it hard to care for themselves, or
 - Are age 60 and older

The following roles are commonly mandated reporters:

- Healthcare professionals (nurses, doctors, etc.)
- School staff (teachers, principals, administrative staff, etc.)
- Social workers and counselors (caseworkers, therapists, psychologists, etc.)

You can always ask whether someone is required to report before you share with them. Advocates and helpline workers (at RCC and elsewhere) can talk with you privately about your thoughts, feelings, and legal rights.

Information for Support People

You are a *support person* if someone close to you has experienced sexual violence. Support people may be friends, partners, relatives, or other loved ones who can help a survivor heal. The more contact you have with a survivor, the more you can impact their healing. Don't underestimate your power!

The goal of this section is to help your influence be informed and empowering.

Remember that RCC's services are also available to you—you deserve support and help as much as your loved one does.



What do you want to read about first?

I don't know. I feel overwhelmed right now.

That's okay. Take a couple deep breaths. You can put this booklet down and come back to it later. Or you can have an advocate walk through it with you, anytime you want—just call one of our helplines.

RCC Advocacy

What is advocacy and what do RCC advocates do? [page 6](#).

I don't know what "support" looks like.

What does my loved one need? [page 7](#).

What do I need to know about sex after sexual assault? [page 9](#).

Tips for different ages and abilities: [page 10](#).

Emotional health and self-care.

How to create a network of support for both of you: [page 15](#).

What do I need? [page 17](#).

Self-care and examples of activities: [page 20](#).

Advocacy & RCC Services

What is an advocate?

For us at RCC, an advocate is someone who:

- Wants to support you in every way we can
- Understands the systems you and the survivor might be working with

In addition to emotional and moral support, we can help you support your loved one as they make choices about what is right for them. This might be a challenging time for you, too, and an advocate can help you identify and connect with resources that can reduce your burdens.

We are trained in interacting with medical, legal, criminal justice, and college campus systems, and experienced with finding and using other resources. But please keep in mind that our advocates are *not actually part of* any of these systems. We can speak up for you and your rights, but we don't have much more power than that.

Identifying your needs and resources

A one-on-one session with an advocate can help you think through what you need, now and in the near future. They can help you work through some of the concerns that may come up as you support your loved one. You can decide if you'd like to continue working with your advocate, or if you'd like to work with someone else or even on your own.

An advocate can help you assess your needs and connect with local resources that can help. If you want, your advocate can be involved in helping you communicate or coordinate services with other agencies.

Emotional support and processing

You might find that this is a confusing time—many support persons aren't sure who to talk to, or how to approach the topic.

You can talk through anything you want with an RCC advocate. Maybe you want to make a plan, or maybe you just want someone to listen. Maybe you want someone to reassure you that you're doing your best in a difficult situation. Maybe you've been thinking about counseling but aren't sure what to expect from it. These are all conversations you can have with your advocate.

To set up a conversation with an advocate, call one of our helplines.



What does my loved one need?

Your loved one’s experiences, and their healing process, will be unique. Let go of how you think you “should” treat a survivor. Instead, lean into their personal process, and be present for them.

In this context, *being present* means being mentally ready to receive whatever they show you or share with you. Your loved one is the expert on their needs and experiences.

If you don’t know where to start, consider how you might treat someone recovering from a major injury or illness. There’s a lot of overlap between physical and psychological pain, and sexual violence often includes both. Our society is often more comfortable with **physical trauma** than **psychological trauma**. That’s why many of us feel prepared to support someone with a physical injury or illness, but not someone having a mental health crisis. People who need mental health support aren’t drastically different from people who need other kinds of support. So if you don’t feel ready to support your loved one, try asking yourself: How would I treat them if they were physically sick or injured? Your answers may not address all of their needs, but it’s a great place to start.

Start with the basics:



The effects of trauma can leak into any area of someone’s life. Your loved one might suddenly struggle with work, relationships, or their sense of self. This probably isn’t a coincidence, even if it seems unrelated. Understanding this will help you encourage them to have patience with themselves and their healing.

Will they want to talk about it?

Creating space for open discussion and communication is an important way you can support your loved one.

1. Start by encouraging your loved one to talk about their experience *if and when they feel comfortable*.

2. If they choose to discuss it with you, *acknowledge their feelings*. Don't argue with their feelings even if you disagree. It's not our role to tell others how to feel. Their feelings are always valid.
3. *Thank them for their trust* if they open up to you.

If they make self-blaming statements, gently disagree. You can share a perspective that's different from theirs, as long as you acknowledge that it's what *you* think and feel. They don't need to think and feel the same way.

<p>× DON'T dismiss how they feel.</p>
<p>"You're being paranoid." "There's no reason to worry about that." "You're overreacting."</p>
<p>× DON'T minimize what happened.</p>
<p>"At least you weren't <i>really</i> raped." "It could've been worse." "Shake it off."</p>
<p>× DON'T pressure them to do something, or to be different.</p>
<p>"I want you to get back to normal." "You have to move on." "Let it go." "You used to be ____."</p>

<p>✓ DO validate how they feel.</p>
<p>"It's okay to feel how you feel." "There's no 'right' way to feel." "There's nothing wrong with you."</p>
<p>✓ DO acknowledge that their experience hurt them.</p>
<p>"I'm so sorry this happened to you." "No one <i>chooses</i> to be hurt." "The situation may be complicated, but what happened to you was not okay."</p>
<p>✓ DO let them make their own decisions, at their own pace.</p>
<p>"What do you need?" "Take as long as you need." "Be patient with yourself. Some things take time." "I can get you more information, so you can decide for yourself."</p>

If you feel your loved one needs support beyond what you and their other support people can offer, you can try to help them find it.

- Talk to them about what they'd like in a counselor.
- Talk to them about support groups in your area.
- Contact your RCC advocate or other professionals for feedback and support.
- Contact a local or national crisis helpline for more resources.

Many of us were raised to value independence so much that we feel guilt or shame for sharing our burdens. You can help your loved one deconstruct this harmful belief.

- Tell them you're glad that they trust you with their needs, even if you can't always meet them.
- Model *healthy burden-sharing*. It's not their job to handle your emotions about their assault, but asking for support in other ways is okay. You could ask to share a stress from your day. Or ask for their help with something they're good at, or something they're interested in.

You shouldn't expect them to do something you can't do in return. If you want them to accept your help, work on accepting theirs.

What do I need to know about sexuality?

After an assault, many survivors associate sex with violence and coercion. This looks different for every person.

- Some people develop strong negative reactions toward sex or intimacy.
- Some people become hyperprotective of their bodies or their feelings.
- Some people want to engage in sex more often than they ever have before.

All of these are normal responses. With patience and ongoing education, you can help your loved one rediscover consensual, enjoyable, age-appropriate intimacy in a variety of forms.

Children	Teens	Adults
<p>Child victims may not fully understand their sexuality, but that doesn't mean they're incapable of sexual feelings.</p> <p>You can restore a healthy sense of boundaries in children by discussing and demonstrating consent in everyday life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ask new friends if hugs are okay ▪ Ask family if they're okay with rough or physical play ▪ Respect and support a child's "no" regarding touch, in any situation 	<p>Teen victims (ages 12-21) may include sexual violence in their concept of what sex is and how it should be.</p> <p>They should be told that assault is fundamentally different from sex. Sex requires mutual consent. Sexual violence occurs when someone's desire for power or control makes free consent impossible.</p> <p>Teen survivors will benefit from ongoing reminders that healthy relational experiences are not violent or forced.</p>	<p>Adult victims may see their victimization as a core component of their personal identity.</p> <p>They will benefit from reminders that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ They are more than their past ▪ They can choose how to define themselves <p>You can help by providing a non-judgmental space for any and all emotions. Whatever they feel on any given day is perfectly normal and appropriate for them.</p>

How to support all ages

How to support a child

If your loved one is younger than 13, it's important to get additional support. Young survivors have age-specific needs that a professional can help you meet. If you are the loved one of a child survivor, it is extremely important that you *too* receive additional support. Our confidential helpline is available 24/7 and is a great place to begin receiving the support you need.

NOTE: Age ranges are provided as a guideline, but are not accurate for every child.

- Immediately reassure them that *you believe everything* that they tell you.
- Reassure them that you love them and that *it's not their fault*, no matter what.
- Thank them for trusting you.
- *See that they get medical attention*, even if they don't seem injured.
- Do what you can to help them feel *safe*.
- Let them talk *at their own pace*. They may need to express their fears or repeat the story of what happened. It's important for you to be available for this.
- *Involve them as much as possible* in the decisions that are made about them. If nothing else, tell them in advance what's about to happen.

Professionals who can help you and your child:

- School staff
- Social workers
- Counselors who specialize in working with children

If anyone says you are **not** eligible for their services, ask them to recommend somewhere else.

If you're outside Dane County, or would like assistance, ask your RCC advocate for local resources.



A very young child (ages 0-4) often won't recognize that anything violating has happened to them. The child is still developing their ability to express their feelings. They might have highly simplified descriptions or memories of the experience. It's important to know that they are more complex on the inside than they can show.

- If they have an emotional outburst (or if *you* do), wait until things calm down. Discuss what happened and what they (or you) were feeling. Children understand emotional communication even if they can't speak.
- Keep a record of their behavior, or ask caregivers to notice their moods and behaviors. This can help a professional develop a care plan.
- Learn more about your own emotions. When you can examine and process them with others, it will give you the energy to support your loved one and yourself.
- Know that what happened is not your fault.



A young child (ages 5-9) may think of what happened as normal, or they may not act differently even after they recognize the trauma. It's common for a child to still care for the person who violated them and want to spend time with them. It's important to know that they *have* been affected even if they don't show obvious symptoms of trauma. You can help them process their experience in many ways:

- If it's appropriate, you can explain that sexual violence is usually motivated by power and control. Don't try to convince them that the perpetrator is "bad."
- If they express care for their perpetrator, don't shame them for those feelings.
- Look for opportunities for them to form healthy relationships. For example:
 - After-school activities
 - Sports
 - Community centers



An older child (ages 10-13) might feel powerless, guilty, or worthless after a sexual assault. At this age, your child is beginning to experience adult fears and feelings. Knowing this may help you appreciate how they understand what happened. There are many things you can do to help your child regain a sense of control and safety:

- Try to maintain their usual activities
- Encourage them to keep up with their interests and friends
- Try to make your daily routine predictable
- Encourage them to accept support, but do not force them

How to support a teen



Believe what they tell you. Tell them that you trust them, even if what they say doesn't make sense at first. You can support them without understanding their story.

Listen without interrupting. Avoid asking detailed questions, which might overwhelm them or imply that you doubt their story.

If they choose to share anything with you, tell them that you love them unconditionally and appreciate their trust.

Respect their privacy. If you want them to trust you, you have to trust them too. Demonstrate with words and actions that you trust them, even when it's hard.

If they don't want to open up to you, tell them that you still support them no matter what. Tell them that nothing is too awful or complicated for you to understand. *But do not pressure them to talk to you.*

Seek outside help so that you can support them well. It's normal to feel anger, worry, guilt, and any other emotion. But it's not your teen's job to take care of you. Try to be calm and supportive when they're present.

You don't need to abandon your routines to care for your teen. You can be supportive without smothering them. But if you can, make yourself a bit more available:

- Invite them along for everyday activities (errands, etc.)
- Give them rides
- Take a little extra time to relax with them

Check in with them. Ask how they're doing. Ask about specific parts of their life that they care about. If they don't feel like talking, try again later.

Remind them as often as necessary that what happened to them is not their fault. Remind *yourself* that you're not to blame either. You didn't choose to harm your child any more than they chose to be harmed.

Talk with them about how you can help them feel safe and loved. Think about what they might need from you, and be ready if they ask for help.

Talk about what consent is. Remind them that saying "yes" and not fighting back *are not the same as freely given, enthusiastic consent*.

It's okay to ask if they consented to *some* things but not others. Explain that consenting to one thing doesn't mean agreeing to everything. Make sure they know you're always on their team.

How to support an adult



Believe what they tell you. Reassure them that you know the assault wasn't their fault. Remind them that you don't see them differently because of this experience.

No matter how they reacted, reassure them that they were not a willing participant. Traumatic stress can make us react in ways that are unusual for us, even weeks or months after the event. There is no right or wrong way to respond to violence.

Let them share at their own pace. Some people will want to share details or repeat their story, and some people want to share company in silence. If you need additional support for yourself, contact our helpline for guidance and feedback.

Encourage them to get medical attention even if there's no apparent physical injury. Many victims are eligible for *free* medical care, and it may help to speak with a nurse or doctor about what happened to them.

Respect their right to decide whether to report to law enforcement. Help them reclaim their sense of safety and control by:

- Honoring their wishes
- Giving them the information they need to make their *own* informed choice

If either of you would like more support, or information about medical or legal options for victims, call our helpline at (608) 251-7273.

What about people with disabilities, chronic illness, or special needs?



Some adults and seniors have physical, mental, or emotional needs that require consistent support and may make them uniquely impacted by sexual violence. Your loved one may identify as a person with disabilities, chronic illness, special needs, or any other condition.

It's important to recognize that vulnerable adults, like most survivors, have intersecting identities. That means there's more to their identity than just the condition that makes them vulnerable. There are many different ways sexual violence can affect their thoughts, feelings, behavior, and sense of self. This is an important thing to keep in mind as you support them through their healing. There's a lot you can do to support your loved one, on the basis of their specific needs.

- **Seek outside support.** For recent, long-term, or ongoing violence, getting help from support professionals may be crucial for your loved one's health. For some people, outside support may include social workers or counselors. For others, it may be helpful to find a support group they like. If you have concerns about whom to trust or where to go, RCC advocates are available to help you consider your options.
- **Avoid making assumptions about how they're doing.** Some people struggle to communicate their needs, or can't express themselves with much complexity. All people who have experienced sexual violence require extra support, regardless of how they *seem* to be doing. Keep an open mind about your loved one's needs, and try to be attentive to any changes in their mood or behavior.
- **Honor their individuality.** They are not defined by this experience, any more than they are defined by what makes them vulnerable. If possible, help them recognize this. Everyone has a story. Remind them that theirs is still being written. They have the power to choose who they want to be and how they want to live, even if they can't control everything that happens to them.
- **Be patient.** Patience can take many forms. Try not to let your care and concern for your loved one overshadow their need for space, privacy, time, or respect. Make sure that you continue to meet your *own* needs so that you can show them patience when they need it.

How to support a senior



Many people mistakenly assume that elders are less vulnerable to sexual abuse than younger people. Research shows that this is untrue. At its core, sexual violence is motivated by power and control. It's fundamentally different from sexual intimacy, and doesn't require sexual attraction, romance, or any degree of victim participation. Many older people will experience sexual violence from intimate partners. Others may become victims of caregivers, family members, acquaintances, or strangers.

Support people can play a life-changing role in a senior survivor's healing, no matter when the violence occurred, or how old they are. The most important thing you can do is trust what your loved one is showing or telling you, and seek outside support right away.

- If your loved one is physically or cognitively vulnerable, it may be difficult for you to tell if sexual violence has occurred. These vulnerabilities might include:
 - Difficulty communicating
 - Paralysis or loss of feeling
 - Physical constraints (bed rest, limited mobility, etc.)
 - Medically-induced sleep
 - Age-related confusion
- Seek medical support as soon as possible. Elderly survivors may require medical attention even if they aren't aware of any harm, or are not exhibiting any symptoms of harm. It's very important for their on-going health for a medical professional to see them right away. They can make sure there's no emergency or long-term care the survivor needs (physical therapy, skin care, STI medication, etc.).
- Notice what triggers or upsets them. When do they express fear, anger, sadness, or anxiety? Share this information with other support people, and work together to avoid re-traumatization.
- Consider your perspective on the world, and how your values or beliefs have changed over time. Your loved one has experienced similar shifts over time. What might be on their mind that you haven't thought of?
- Be patient. Your loved one may not want to share anything with you about what happened to them. That's okay! Or, they may want to talk a lot about it. Whatever brings them the most comfort is the right thing for them to do.
- Senior victims of sexual violence often experience more severe mental, emotional, and physical trauma than younger people do. It's okay to feel overwhelmed by their needs. To avoid doing unintentional harm, be clear about how much support you can provide. Make it clear to them how much, how often, or in what ways you can support them.

How to build a support network

Friends, family, and significant others play an important role in a person’s healing, but they aren’t the only ones. Your loved one probably has close contact with many people who can provide support in different ways. This includes roommates, neighbors, service providers, co-workers, and more. Try asking some of these people for help. This will support your loved one from different angles, and take some of the burden off you.

			
People in the survivor’s daily life	Mental health professionals	People at the survivor’s workplace	Other people in the survivor’s life
FRIEND ROOMMATE NEIGHBOR	COUNSELOR HELPLINES SOCIAL WORKER CASE MANAGER	COWORKER BOSS/TEACHER H.R. STAFF	RELIGIOUS LEADER MENTOR/SPONSOR FELLOW GROUP MEMBERS COACH

But remember that your loved one is entitled to their privacy, and it’s crucial to respect that, even when it’s inconvenient. They might feel that requesting accommodations will expose their secrets, *even if they don’t share details* about their experience. It’s okay if they don’t want to share with everyone. You can remind them that people seek accommodations for all kinds of situations. And you can encourage them to ask for support with or without sharing why they need it.

If you’re wondering whether to reach out to someone, consider:

- **How much will my loved one trust them?**
- **How much can they *actually* help?**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ My loved one trusts them! ✓ AND they might really help! <hr style="border: 0.5px solid #008080;"/> <p>★ Ask these people first! If you know they’ll connect with your loved one, and you think they can help, they’re a great choice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ My loved one might not trust them. ✓ BUT they might really help! <hr style="border: 0.5px solid #008080;"/> <p>If a professional or other stranger might help, talk about it with your loved one. Don’t choose <i>for</i> them, but in a crisis you can nudge them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ My loved one trusts them! ✗ BUT they probably can’t really help. <hr style="border: 0.5px solid #008080;"/> <p>These people might <i>want</i> to help, but if they don’t have the time, energy, or knowledge, they can’t do much.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ My loved one might not trust them. ✗ And they probably can’t really help. <hr style="border: 0.5px solid #008080;"/> <p>Avoid asking these people for help!</p>

In a crisis, it can be hard to find the line between gathering support and protecting the survivor's privacy. If you're wondering whether the action you want to take is appropriate, try asking yourself these questions:

- Can I involve my loved one in this process without pressuring them?
- Is it okay to ask them if I can contact this person for support?
- What is the potential harm if I ask this person to support my loved one?
- What is the potential harm if I *don't*?

Counseling can be daunting for some people, especially those who have never tried it before. Remember that counselors are like doctors and dentists. They specialize in a specific area of the human experience, and they exist to help us treat and prevent our suffering.

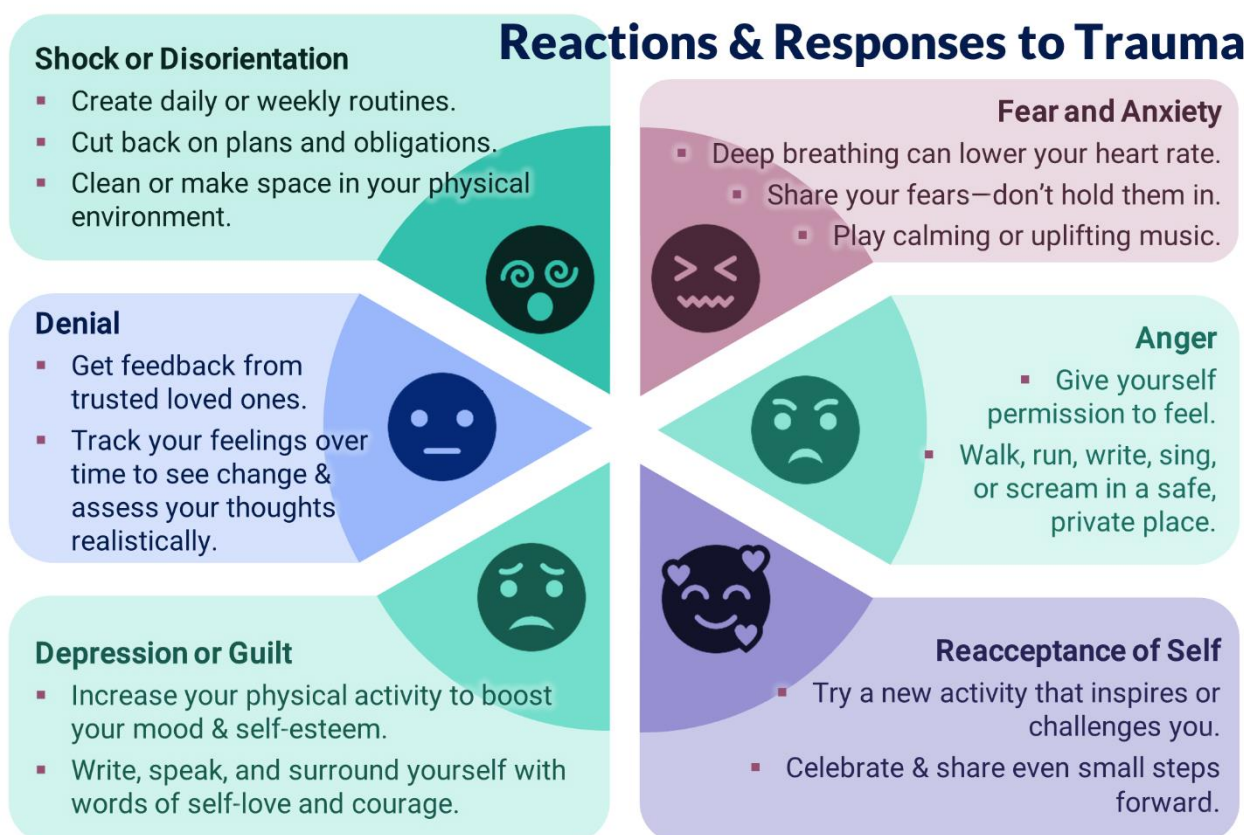
What do I need?

It's common for support people to experience trauma symptoms just from being close to their loved one's trauma. This is called *vicarious trauma*. It's a natural side effect of caring for a trauma survivor, and there's no shame in that.

Even if you don't experience vicarious trauma, it's important to acknowledge your own needs. This doesn't mean you ignore your loved one. In fact, it will boost your confidence and your ability to be present for them.

Below is an overview of the feelings commonly associated with trauma. Your loved one may be feeling many of the same things. But your feelings might not be identical, or might exist for different reasons.

Remember, every person responds differently. There's no "right" way to feel, and no "right" thing to do about it. Simply *recognize* that you have feelings, and that they require patience, self-kindness, and attention.



Most people have habits or behaviors to help them cope with stress. These are often useful for processing our thoughts and managing our energy. But be careful not to overuse them. Overuse drains our energy, and reduces our ability to be reflective. Even so-called "healthy" activities (like exercising, napping, or socializing) can become unhealthy if overused.

Once you've identified your go-to coping behaviors, try adding **one** new activity that is *helpful* but *different* from the others. This may not be comfortable or easy, but it may also help you find balance. Not all self-care has to be slow or soothing. It can also be challenging or goal-oriented.



Self-Check Questions for Support People

1. Recently have I had enough...

- food & water?
- sleep & rest?
- support from other people?

2. Today, how do I feel...

- physically?
- mentally?
- spiritually?
- about myself?

Notice your answers without judgment. It's okay not to be okay!

Being honest with ourselves about how we're doing is the first step toward changing it.

What do I need to do today to care for myself, besides supporting my loved one?

- Spend time with people I like
- Treat myself
- Do an activity I enjoy

How should I show my emotions?

Your loved one may feel reassured and validated to see you sympathizing with their experience. On the other hand, they may become anxious if your emotions are very strong, or seem uncontrollable. This is especially true if they were hurt by someone close to them. It's important to pay attention to how openly you express your emotions to your loved one. Try to find a balance between sharing everything and sharing nothing. Don't try to force your loved one to share your exact feelings. You are entitled to *your* feelings, and they are entitled to *theirs*.

Being supportive means showing respect for how your loved one feels, no matter what *you* feel or think. This creates *emotional safety* for them, which protects your relationship.

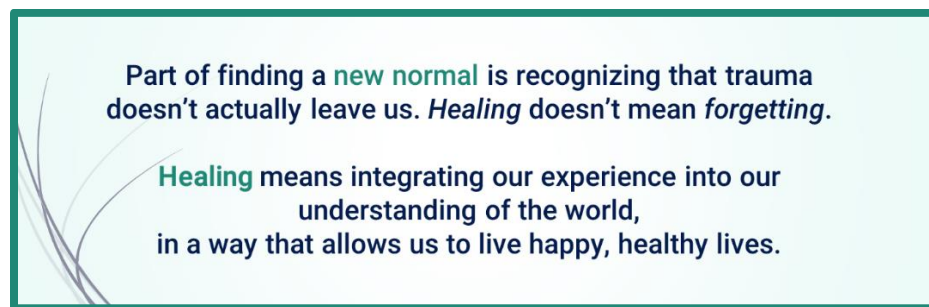
If you are supporting a child survivor, hiding your feelings doesn't encourage them to be honest and authentic about their own reactions. Children may assume that they are responsible for your pain and what happened. Be clear that your feelings are not their fault and not their responsibility.

Taking care of yourself ensures that your loved one can focus on themselves and their journey.

RCC advocates are available for support people, too—not just survivors. We are available to listen, give feedback, and connect you to any resources you might need. It’s our pleasure to help others become advocates in their own lives. If you’d like more information about talking to an advocate, call our helpline at (608) 251-7273.

What does “normal” look like now?

Anyone who has had a traumatic experience needs time and support to restore their sense of stability. It’s common for people who have experienced sexual violence to make lifestyle changes as they process what happened to them. These changes may be big or small, and you might observe this either in your loved one’s life or in your own. At some point, you may wonder when you or your loved one will “feel better,” and why the healing process is taking so long.



One of the greatest things you can do is to make space for your loved one to discover their thoughts, fears, goals, and perspectives. It might also help to ask them questions that prompt them to reflect and share.

Don’t rush them (or yourself). As much as possible, resist becoming discouraged or hyper-focused on the healing process. They need normalcy in their lives, and so do you. If you have put things on hold to support your loved one, return to them as soon as possible.

As survivors and support people, we don’t “work on our trauma”—we work on our **resilience**. Resilience is our ability to overcome difficulties in a way that makes us even more capable going forward. Building resilience is not an overnight process. It doesn’t happen at a steady pace, or in one consistent direction. Resilience is about flexibility as much as it is about strength and courage. It requires us to be adaptable and patient with ourselves and others. It requires us to listen to our needs, acknowledge them, and honor them with words and actions.

This journey begins with you. There is much you can offer your loved one as you both become more resilient people. But you can’t offer help or freedom that you haven’t given yourself first. So give yourself what you need. Exercise patience, self-love, honesty, and joy. Every day begins with uncertainty, and every day provides an opportunity for something good. Focus on the positive potential of the future. Our power to hope gives us the strength to overcome.

Self-Care

Self-care is any activity that lets you focus on yourself or your well-being, or that grounds you. It can look many different ways. You get to decide what it means to you and what activities count as self-care for you.

The goal of this section is to help you start building a self-care practice that meets your needs and goals. Creating a self-care routine can help you develop useful tools for coping with or avoiding a crisis. Making it a routine also makes it easier to remind yourself that you deserve this care from yourself, and also from others.

Self-care doesn't have to be glamorous or expensive. There are lots of options, depending on your needs. In times of crisis, a simple breathing exercise can make a big difference. Sometimes you might do small things that bring your mind and body some comfort, like a soft blanket, your favorite warm drink, or music you associate with fond memories.

Self-care can also mean doing nothing. It can mean resting, zoning out, or just giving yourself space to feel what you're feeling. Self-care is never one-size-fits-all. Everyone has their own experience and no one can define "care" for you.

You can have different levels of self-care, too. Sometimes you might need time alone to process things or take care of your individual needs. Other times you might need to connect with others. Sometimes we can take care of ourselves and others at the same time.

Examples of individual self-care:

- Developing grounding techniques (like deep breaths or stretching) to help process anxiety
- Creating daily hygiene routines
- Bedtime rituals to help you sleep

Examples of communal self-care:

- Cooking (or eating) with your family and friends
- Sharing music, culture, or art
- Dancing with people you love

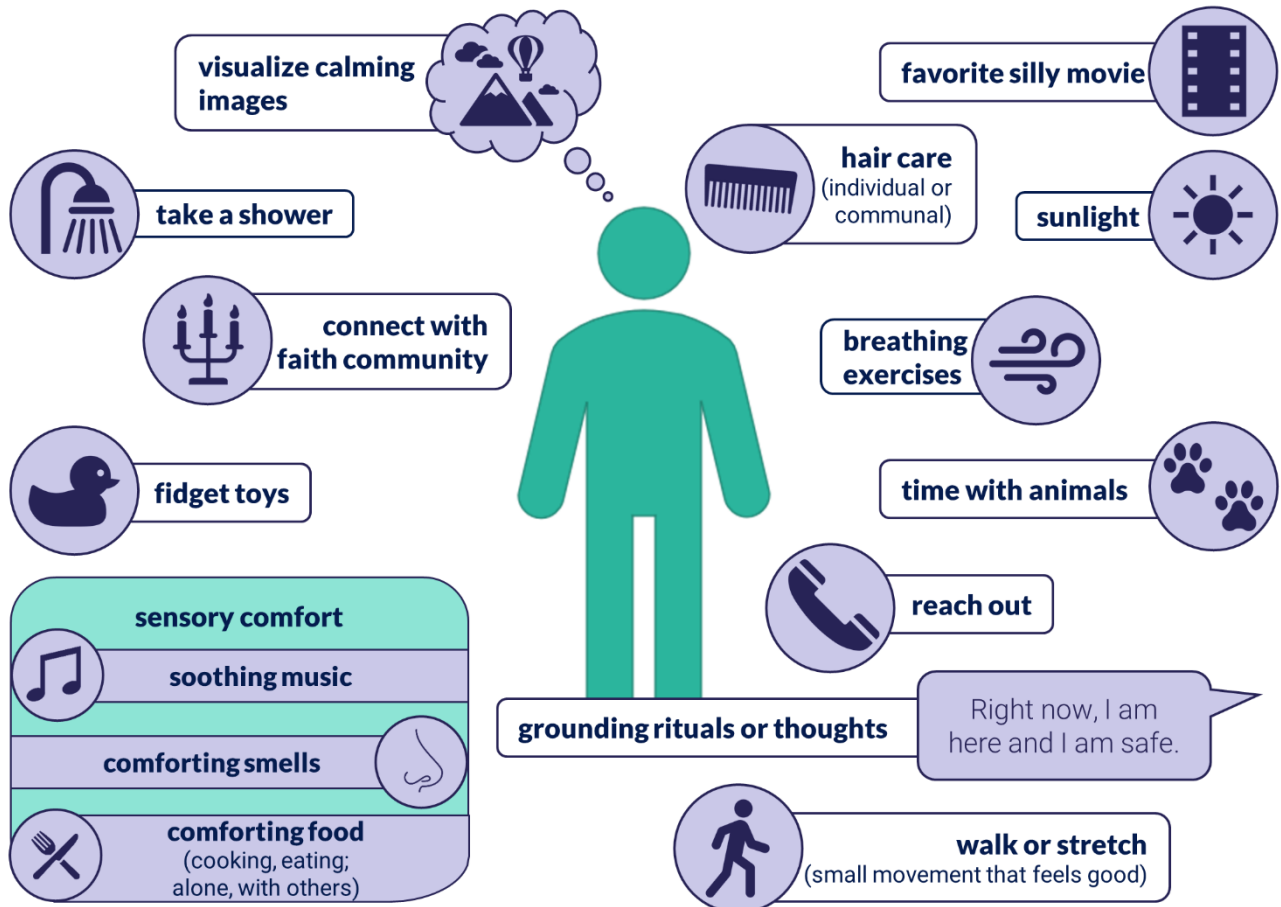
One of the most important aspects of self-care is cultivating self-compassion. You know yourself and your experience better than anyone else. Comforting yourself can help you reconnect with yourself and your body. Remember to talk to yourself kindly, as you would to a good friend. Remind yourself that you're doing your best, even though it might not feel that way sometimes.

Emotional Self-Care Discovery Toolkit

Look through this section for ideas. Try out these activities, and if you like them, make them part of your routines and rituals. Feel free to change them or create your own similar activity. Remember, this is all about what works for *you*.

Start small

It's important to have a range of self-care options. Below are some examples of small things you could do immediately or soon. Major self-care activities (such as switching jobs or finding new housing) often take a while. What can you do today? Feel free to add your own!



Create a Checklist

What daily activities give you comfort or make you feel a little better? What will keep you from feeling worse?

Build your own checklist! We've given you an example and some ideas to get started.

Example:

- Take my meds
- Eat lunch!
- Call my brother
- Go to the park (even for 5 minutes)
- Hot cocoa before bed 😊

More ideas:

Basic needs

- Eating
- Drinking water
- Taking medications
- Caffeine or nicotine

Laughing

Socializing

Moving your body or going for a walk

A warm drink

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Long-Term Self-Care Goals

Even though you might not know exactly what you want right now, sometimes it can be helpful to think about what you might want in the future.

In a year (or many years), where do you want to be? Can you think of anything you'd like to work towards? Sometimes we can take small steps toward meeting these goals—can you think of any?

Examples might include:

- Seeing the end of a court case
- Creating a self-care routine
- Getting a full night of sleep
- Sharing your journey with someone when you're ready

Gratitude

Make a list of small things that make you feel grateful.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

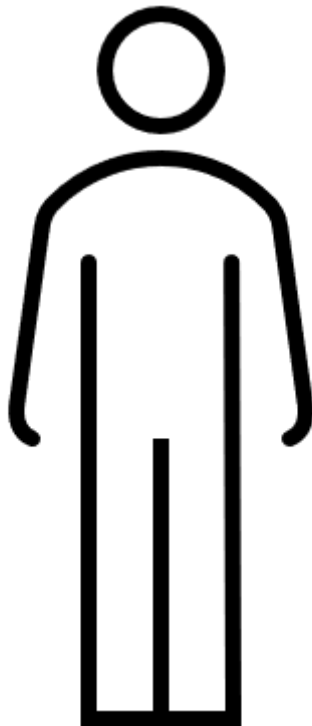
10.

Where is this feeling coming from?

Your emotions show up in your body, and body scans are one way to understand them better. Here are some ways people use this exercise:

- ***How does this emotion make my body feel?*** If you know that you're anxious, triggered, angry, etc., it might help to observe how that emotion affects you. Some people simply notice without judgment. Others use this to choose a self-care activity. For example, if anxiety makes your shoulders tight, you could roll your shoulders, apply heat, or massage them. (It might not make the anxiety go away but it might make it a little less intense.)
- ***What emotion am I feeling?*** If you can't tell which emotion you're feeling, it might help to locate and describe your physical sensations. Sometimes it's hard to identify an emotion until you know how it feels physically.

Find a place to sit, stand, or lie comfortably. Close your eyes if you like. Scan your body for strong sensations. Where are they coming from? Write down or draw your impressions.



Dear Diary

Sometimes writing down our difficult thoughts can help us clear space in our heads for other feelings. What's taking up space in your mind?

It's a good idea to set a time limit on this activity. Otherwise negative thoughts can take over your whole day or night. Set a timer or alarm for 15-30 minutes. And even before time is up, if this doesn't feel helpful, take a break.

Dear Diary,

Mood Tracking

Tracking your daily mood on paper can be useful. You might not realize that your general mood has been up or down until you can see everything together. Use the one below or create your own. Try to do it for at least a couple weeks to see if it helps.

Fill in each day's square with a color you associate with your dominant mood for that day. (See right for an example.) You can also write in the dates if that helps keep track. Over time you might see patterns. For example, the tracker at right has good days every Tuesday. What happens on Tuesdays?

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
green	blue	green	green	yellow	red	red
blue	red	green	green	blue	blue	blue
green	yellow	green	blue	green	blue	green

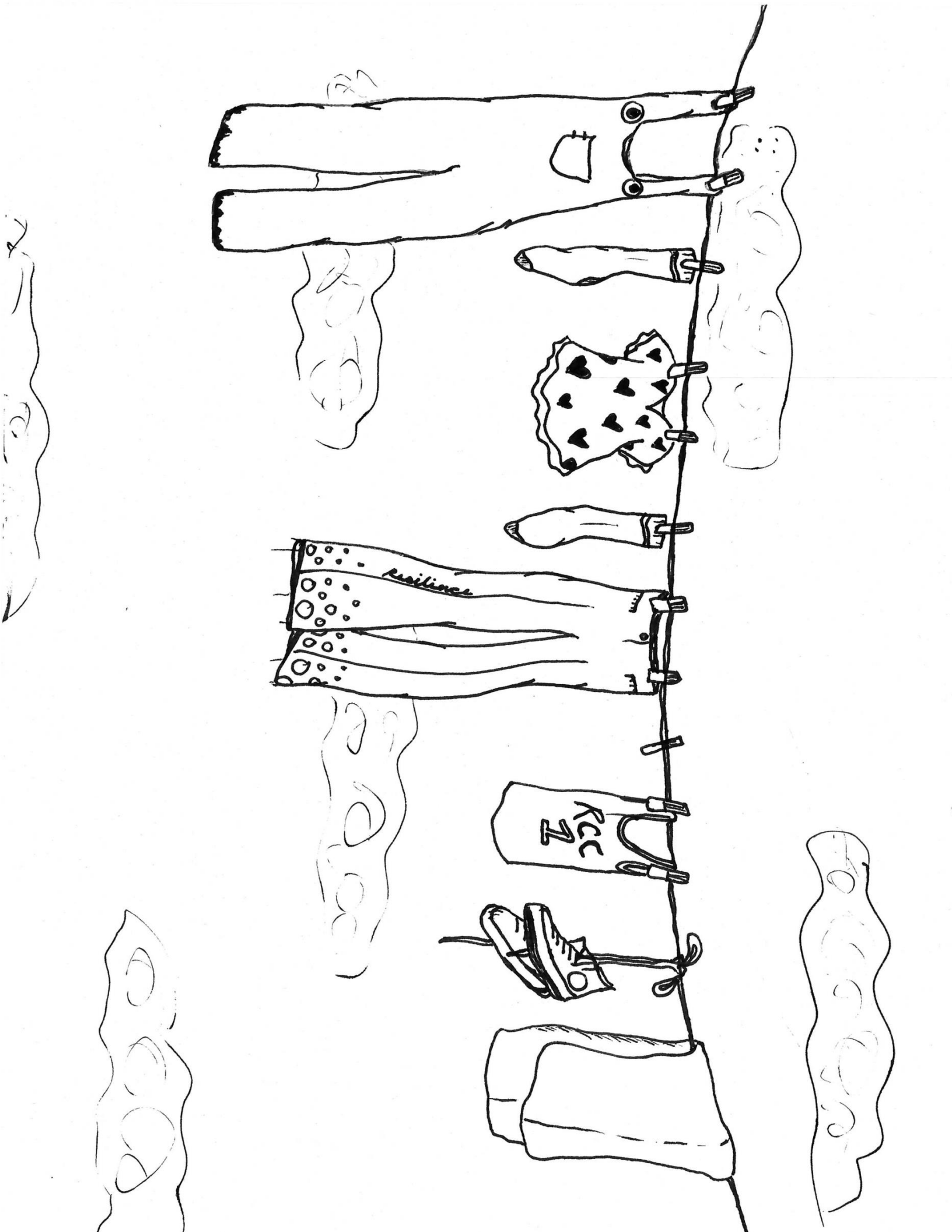
KEY
 relaxed, happy, content
 energetic, excited, motivated
 angry, frustrated, bad mood
 sad, depressed, lonely

S	M	T	W	T	F	S

KEY

	relaxed, happy, content
	energetic, excited, motivated
	angry, frustrated, bad mood
	bored, dull, tired, sick
	sad, depressed, lonely
	afraid, nervous, anxious
	average, fine, normal

Fill in the colors you associate with the feelings above. Or you can make your own list of feelings and colors below:



We are always here for you.

Our goal is to support your decisions and your journey. If we aren't part of your plan, that's okay. If you'd like us to work with you, just let us know. You are always just a phone call away from a listening ear. We believe you.

Quick Resource List

All listed resources serve Dane County, Wis.

Rape Crisis Center	Resource for emotional support, education, and advocacy. HELPLINE ENGLISH 608-251-7273 SPANISH 608-258-2567	2801 Coho St #301 Madison, WI 53713 theRCC.org
Dane County District Attorney – Victim Witness Unit	Resource for information, services, and rights. OFFICE 608-266-9003 DaneVW@da.wi.gov	251 S. Hamilton St. #3000 Madison, WI 53703 DA.CountyOfDane.com/DA-Units/Victim-Witness-Unit
Domestic Abuse Intervention Services (DAIS)	Serves victims of domestic violence, including a shelter. HELPLINE 608-251-4445	2102 Fordem Ave Madison, WI 53704 AbuseIntervention.org
Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center	Serves child victims of abuse & their families. OFFICE 608-661-9787 info@SafeHarborHelpsKids.org	2445 Darwin Rd Madison, WI 53704 SafeHarborHelpsKids.org
Briarpatch Youth Services	Serves runaway, homeless, and at-risk youth, including a shelter. HELPLINE 608-251-1126 TOLL FREE 800-798-1126	2720 Rimrock Rd Madison, WI 53713 youthSOS.org
Unidos Against Domestic Violence ENGLISH & SPANISH	Sexual and domestic violence services for the Latinx community. HELPLINE 608-256-9195 TOLL FREE 800-510-9195	unidosWI.org

<p>Centro Hispano of Dane County ENGLISH & SPANISH</p>	<p>Social services for the Latinx community. <u>OFFICE</u> 608-255-3018 reception@MiCentro.org</p>	<p>810 W Badger Rd Madison, WI 53713 MiCentro.org</p>
<p>Catholic Multicultural Center</p>	<p>Resource center offering immigration services and assistance with personal needs and employment. <u>OFFICE</u> 608-661-3512</p>	<p>1862 Beld St Madison, WI 53713 CMCmadison.org</p>
<p>Hmong Family Strengthening Helpline ENGLISH & HMONG</p>	<p>Support for Hmong people experiencing violence or abuse. <u>HELPLINE</u> 877-740-4292 (CALL OR TEXT)</p>	<p>BBWPcoalition.org/helpline</p>
<p>Freedom, Inc.</p>	<p>Anti-violence organization working in Black & Southeast Asian communities. <u>OFFICE</u> (608) 630-8901 info@freedom-inc.org</p>	<p>2110 Luann Lane Madison, WI 53713 freedom-inc.org</p>
<p>StrongHearts Native Helpline</p>	<p>Serves Native people affected by domestic & sexual violence. <u>HELPLINE</u> 844-762-8483</p>	<p>StrongHeartsHelpline.org</p>
<p>Deaf Unity ENGLISH & ASL</p>	<p>Serves Deaf people affected by abuse. <u>HOTLINE</u> help@DeafUnityWI.org TEXT 608-466-2881</p>	<p>DeafUnityWI.org</p>

There are lots of resources out there! We've posted some on our website at <http://theRCC.org/resources/>. Scan the QR code to get there fast! →



