

Crisis-Line Guidelines: Emotional Support

Who are you talking to?

Survivor, friend, partner, relative? If you aren't talking with the survivor, suggest that the survivor be given the crisis line number also. If the survivor is there, ask him/her if he/she would like to speak to you directly. With co-survivors, focus first on their own needs and then on what they can do to help the survivor.

Determine the survivor's immediate physical needs.

Is the survivor in a safe place; is he/she injured, hurt, bleeding; does he/she need immediate medical attention? Assess and address safety and physical needs first.

Offer support to the survivor.

- **Listen actively.** Let the survivor know that you are paying attention. Ask questions to clarify but don't interrogate.
- **Accept what the survivor says.** The survivor is the one who was there and is feeling the pain now. Reassure the validity of his/her emotions and the reality of what has happened.
- **Allow the survivor to ventilate his/her feelings.** Don't be afraid of silence. The survivor may not know what to say or how to begin. Be patient.
- **Reinforce positive steps the survivor has taken.** (Like calling you, fighting back, running, yelling, surviving, etc.) Never criticize the survivor for something he/she did not do (fight back, run, call the police, etc.)

Assess what the survivor needs.

- **What kind of support system already exists for the survivor?**
- **How can you help?**
 - Emotional support
 - Procedural Information-police, hospitals, courts, etc
 - Referral to other agencies
 - Information about support groups, self defense classes, etc

Assist the survivor in forming an action plan.

- Remember that our role is to offer options and help the survivor make decisions, not to make them for the survivor.
- Give a limited number of referral options; the survivor may become overwhelmed with too many referrals. Let the survivor know that he/she is always welcome to call back if these options do not work, or if new issues develop.
- It is essential to allow the survivor to regain control of his/her own life. Allow the survivor to make calls – do not make them for him/her.
- At the end of the conversation, summarize the call so that you both know what has been decided. Feel free to tell the survivor to call back anytime for more information or support.