

How to Help a Friend

Before an incident occurs

Notice what is going on in your environment.

Look for red flags. Fight against the urge to look away or focus on your phone when you are out. Observe the reactions of others and check in with them.

Examples of things to notice include:

- How much alcohol your friends are consuming
- Your friends' interactions with strangers
- Unexplained bruises or other injuries
- Marked change in your friend or co-worker's behavior or demeanor
- People getting into a heated argument in public

Assume personal responsibility.

We all have a responsibility to help ensure the safety of the whole College community! Many times one person stepping in gets others to help in a situation. Make a commitment to be that one person.

Know how to help.

Familiarize yourself with the resources at Hocking College and in the larger community. Know who to contact for specific issues. Learning and thinking about what you can do in advance of a situation will enable you to be more confident to act if the situation arises.

Watch this short video for an example of how to effectively help someone:

[Basic actions you can take to stop sexual violence](#)

After a person discloses sexual violence

Actively listen, keep eye contact and focus on what the person is saying. Be in the moment and don't interrupt. Sometimes repeating back what they said shows that you are paying close attention.

Respond compassionately, showing empathy. Below are some examples of safe, supportive responses:

- **“I’m sorry you are going through this.”** Acknowledge that the experience has affected their life. A phrase like “This must be really tough for you,” helps to communicate empathy.
- **“It’s not your fault.”** It is common for survivors to blame themselves, especially if they know the perpetrator personally. Tell them, maybe even more than once, that they are not to blame.
- **“Thank you for coming to me with this.”** It can be extremely difficult for survivors of sexual violence and other types of abuse to come forward and share their story. They may feel ashamed, concerned that they won’t be believed or worried they’ll be blamed. Leave any “why”

questions and investigations to the experts—your job is to support this person. Be careful not to interpret calmness as a sign that the event did not occur—everyone responds differently. The best thing you can do is take them seriously and assist them in getting help.

- **“You are not alone.”** Say that you are there for them and willing to listen to their story. Remind them that there are service providers who will be able to support them as they recover from the experience.
- **“Do you want to get medical help?”** It's OK to ask this directly. The person might need medical attention, even if the event happened a while ago. You can support them by offering to accompany them to get medical treatment and to get more information.
- **“This doesn’t change how I think of you.”** Sometimes survivors* are concerned that sharing what happened will change the way other people see them, especially their romantic partners.

Be patient. Recognize that recovery takes time and that coping is different for everyone.

Encourage the person to seek further help. Share [resources](#). Keep in mind that it is totally their decision whether or not use the resources. You can assure the person that the College has a process to address the situation as it may interfere with their ability to focus on their College work or present a safety concern.

Offer to go with the person if they want to see a counselor or get medical attention. This further shows that you are willing to provide support. If you are on campus, you can offer to walk the person to Counseling Services or the Police Department.

Do not blame or judge. Don’t analyze their experience or don’t criticize their actions or choices. A survivor is never at fault for what happened.

These tips are modified from the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN): <https://rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-recovery/respond-to-a-survivor>

A note about confidentiality:

Remember, if you are a responsible employee, and someone discloses an experience of sexual violence that impacts them and/or others at the College (no matter where the incident occurred), you are not able to keep that information to yourself. You should tell the person who discloses that you will use discretion, but as an employee, you must inform specific individuals of the College who are tasked with addressing such matters. Although the Title IX Office must evaluate the information and reach out to the survivor, the survivor can decide whether they want to participate in the College's process.

**While we use the term "survivor" on this page, people who experience sexual violence have the right to identify in any way they choose. We use the word survivor here because it is a concise word that fits the context of this section.*