

# SaferCommunity

## DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL HARM

Sexual harm, including sexual assault and harassment, is an abuse of power and control. It is a traumatic experience that can overwhelm a person's capacity to cope. Some of the best ways to support a victim/survivor is by validating their experience, avoiding victim-blaming, and giving them a sense of control around their own needs.

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### What should you do if someone discloses that they have experienced sexual harm?

#### Believe

Believe what the person is telling you, don't question them or blame them for the abuse.

e.g. "I'm sorry that happened to you" or "It's not your fault"

#### Listen

Give them your full attention. Secure a private space or ensure they are comfortable to talk further. Hear what the person is saying without judgement and without interrupting.

Ask questions only to ensure their physical and medical safety. Avoid "why" questions. Even with good intentions, 'why' questions can sound accusatory and make victims/survivors blame themselves.

#### Reassure

Reassure the person that it was the right decision to disclose, ask them what you can do to support them and help keep them safe.

e.g. "Thank you for trusting me enough to tell me what happened to you" or "Please let me know how I can be of support to you during this difficult time"

### SAFER COMMUNITY

Safer Community provides advice, support and referrals if you witness or experience unacceptable or concerning behaviour.

P: 03 9479 8988

E: [safercommunity@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:safercommunity@latrobe.edu.au)

W: [latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity](http://latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity)

Offices: Bundoora PE level 2, Bendigo SSC

## KEY FACTS

- 1 in 5 adult women and 1 in 20 adult men experience sexual violence
- Only 1 in 6 victim-survivors report to Police
- Between 2-10% of sexual assault reports are 'false'
- One of the main reasons victim-survivors do not disclose or report to Police is a fear of not being believed

### **Support**

Acknowledge the persons story and offer empathy.

e.g. "I can only imagine how difficult this must have been and continues to be, I'm sorry you had to go through this" or "It's okay to feel upset"

### **Refer**

Work within your role. Your job is to detect the issue and to refer to the appropriate service.

Empower the person to seek professional help, talk to them about the support services available, you can offer to call the service, make an appointment or to go with them.

e.g. "This is really important, and I'd like to get you appropriate support" or "I'd like to contact Safer Community with you, so you can get confidential support and advice. Would that be ok?"

### **Record**

Keep a record of what they disclosed, it may be needed later.

### **Debrief**

You may feel impacted after responding to a disclosure of sexual harm, you should take the time to debrief and seek support for yourself.

## SUPPORT AND REFERRALS

### Immediate assistance

- **Security** 24/7 assistance on campus 9479 2222 at all campuses
- Police or Ambulance call **Triple Zero** 000

### Reporting

- **Safer Community** for advice, support and referrals, whether you want to make a formal report or not, and whether it happened on campus or not, call 9479 8988 or visit [www.latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity)
- **Victoria Police** Sexual Offence Investigation Team (SOCIT), find your local at [www.police.vic.gov.au](http://www.police.vic.gov.au)

### Personal support

- **Student Counselling** for personal emotional support for students, visit [www.latrobe.edu.au/counselling](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/counselling)
- **La Trobe University Crisis Line** for out of hours crisis support, call 1300 146 307 or text 0488 884 100
- **Employee Assistance Program** for staff call 1300 687 327 or visit [www.intranet.latrobe.edu.au](http://www.intranet.latrobe.edu.au)
- **1800 Respect** for 24/7 phone and online counselling for sexual assault, call 1800 737 732
- **Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA)** offers specialist sexual assault counselling, visit [www.casa.org.au](http://www.casa.org.au)
- **Rainbow Door** offers specialist support for LGBTIQ+ people, call 1800 729 367 or text 0480 017 246