

RESPONDING TO ADULT DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

WHAT IS DISCLOSURE?

A disclosure occurs when someone tells you about their experience of sexual violence. The experience may have happened recently or a long time ago.

Sexual violence can be perpetrated by a stranger, but is most often perpetrated by someone known to the survivor, such as an acquaintance or partner.

Sexual violence is an umbrella term that includes sexual assault and sexual harassment. Sexual assault is any unwanted, non-consensual contact of a sexual nature. Sexual assault includes rape, as well as any unwanted touching, kissing, grabbing etc. Sexual assault is defined by the absence of consent, not the presence of force. Sexual harassment can include making comments about a person's body, sexist, misogynistic, sexually explicit, homophobic or transphobic jokes, or posts to social media.

What is my role when I receive a disclosure?

There are numerous barriers to disclosing, particularly for survivors who are marginalized based on disability, ethno cultural or racial background, sexual orientation and gender identities. Many people who experience sexual violence are hesitant to disclose because they fear they will not be believed, and that they will be blamed and shamed.

Your response to a disclosure means a lot.

One of the most important things you can do for a survivor is to **listen without judgement** and **be present** for them.



The next thing to do is check in about how you can be helpful. People disclose sexual violence for a variety of reasons and it is important not to make assumptions. Sometimes survivors disclose because they need emotional support, practical help, or the disclosure may be context specific and they would not have chosen to tell you if it wasn't necessary.

The best way to ensure you are helpful is to inquire directly. For example, ask **“what can I do?”**, **“how can I be helpful?”**, **“thank you for bringing this to me, what do you need from me next?”**

Confidentiality

If you receive a disclosure of sexual violence it is important to inform the person that **what they tell you is confidential**. However, there are limits to confidentiality: If someone presents an imminent danger to themselves or others; if they reveal apparent or suspected child or elder abuse; or if you are subpoenaed by the court. If you have questions about confidentiality and its limits in regards to sexual violence disclosures please consider contacting the SARC Coordinator.

What else can I do?

- Let the survivor know that you believe them, by simply saying “I believe you.”
- Acknowledge how hard it is for them to share their story
- Tell them that you are sorry they have experienced sexual violence

HELPFUL RESOURCES

ON CAMPUS

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)
SGW H 645, 514-848-2424 ext. 3353

Counselling & Psychological Services
SGW H-440, 514-848-2424 ext. 3545
LOY AD-103, 514-848-2424 ext. 3555

Health Services
SGW GM-200, 514-848-2424 ext. 3565
LOY AD 131, 514-848-2424 ext. 3575

Office of Rights and Responsibilities
SGW GM-1120, 514- 848-2424 ext. 8659

Centre for Gender Advocacy
2110 Mackay St., 514-848-2424 ext. 7431

OFF CAMPUS

Montreal Sexual Assault Centre (designated centre)
(8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) 514-934-0354

Montreal General Hospital (designated centre)
(5 p.m. onwards) 514-934-8090

Sexual Assault Centres
(CALACS) 514-529-5252

Crime victim's assistance centres
(CAVAC) 514-277-9860

Help and information centre on sexual harassment in the workplace (GAIHST) 514-526-0789

Sexual Assault Provincial Helpline (24/7)
1-888-933-9007 or 514-933-9007 in Montreal

- Be very clear that they are not to blame for the violence
- Ask the survivor if they have any immediate safety concerns that they would like your help with (physical and/or emotional safety)
- Offer information about support resources
- Support the survivor's right to follow all, some or none of your suggestions-being in charge is an important part of healing.
- Get support for yourself if you need it.

How may I react when I receive a disclosure?

You may feel fear, anger, shock, disbelief, helplessness or horror. You may be worried about providing the "right" response to the disclosure. These feelings can be overwhelming and can make it difficult to find the words to support, encourage, and problem solve with the person who has disclosed to you. It's ok to not have all of the answers, you are not alone and there is help for both you and the survivor.

If you find yourself being negatively impacted by the process of receiving disclosures, try to find someone you trust to talk to about the reactions you are having.

Please consider contacting the SARC Coordinator to talk about your experiences and how to get support.

What resources can I provide to the survivor?

You can refer and/or accompany the survivor to the Concordia University Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC). The SARC is located at 1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., H-645 and is open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The SARC provides confidential and non-judgemental support to Concordia University students, staff and faculty of all genders and orientations who have been affected by sexual violence. The SARC services include one-on-one and group support, crisis intervention, referrals to on and off campus resources and accompaniment for survivors who choose to involve the police, court or hospital.

SARC Coordinator: jennifer.drummond@concordia.ca, 514-848-2424 ext. 3353

SARC Service Assistant: ashley.allen@concordia.ca, 514-848-2424 ext. 5972

LEARN MORE AT: concordia.ca/sarc

SGW CAMPUS: 1455 De Maisonneuve W., H 645 • 514-848-2424 ext. 3353 • sarc@concordia.ca