



FINDING SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE PEOPLE TO HELP

If you have experienced sexual violence you may feel very alone. You may feel that no one can understand what you have been through and you might also have emotions of guilt, fear and embarrassment. This might stop you from wanting to talk about what has happened to you.

If you have experienced sexual violence, even though you might feel alone, it is important to know you are not. There are many other people who have been sexually assaulted, and there are safe and supportive people and organisations you can talk to who will understand what you are going through.

ARE YOU FEELING AFRAID TO REACH OUT FOR HELP?

It is normal to feel afraid to talk about what has happened to you.

You might have been told or threatened to keep the sexual assault a secret.

You might be scared that no one will believe you.

If you told someone about the sexual abuse before and they didn't believe you, you might not feel confident to try again. Maybe you made the decision to never tell anyone.

You might be worried that you will somehow be blamed for what happened.

You might also be worried about how people will react, especially that they might have a negative reaction.

If you experienced sexual violence by somebody of the same gender you might be worried that if you tell someone what happened they will think you must be homosexual.

You might be scared that what you say won't be kept confidential and that members of your community will find out and judge you.

You might be concerned that if people do find out that it will bring shame upon your family.

You may be worried that if people find out about what has happened to you, or if you reach out for help, it may negatively impact your application for asylum or visa status.

These fears and worries make sense. However, it is important to remember that there are trusted, kind people who will support and believe you if you choose to talk about what has happened to you. It is never too late to begin to tell someone you trust and begin the process of healing.

It is important to find *safe* and *supportive* people in the community if you have experienced sexual violence.

A safe person is someone who

- believes you
- cares about you
- will want to help you, and
- will respect your privacy.

A supportive person will help you to

- be believed
- be understood
- be told "This was not your fault"
- have a safe and confidential environment where you can speak openly
- overcome any feelings of shame and humiliation
- build or re-build your self esteem
- get back in contact with your feelings, and
- use your voice
- Make choices

Who might support you?

- Partner
- Close family member
- Trusted friend
- Religious leader
- Community leader
- Doctor or other medical professional
- Counsellor
- Teacher
- Case worker
- Community organisation

If the first person you speak with doesn't react in a helpful or positive way, you have not done anything wrong. Find someone else to talk with – sometimes finding the right person can take time. Please keep trying. There are people who can and want to help you!

If you don't have anyone who can support you, there are also many organisations who have a lot of experience in helping survivors of sexual violence. These are free (no cost) services that you can contact. They will listen and provide help.

These include:

- **1800RESPECT:** National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. Call 1800 737 732.
- **NSW Sexual Violence Helpline.** Call 1800 424 017.
- **Victims Services NSW.** Call 1800 633 063.

If you don't speak English, you can use:

- **Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National):** Provides immediate interpreting services. Call **131 450**.

There are also organisations who have experience in helping survivors of sexual violence who are new to Australia, or who can help refugees, asylum seekers or people holding temporary visas.

- The **Asylum Seekers Centre.** Call (02) 9078 1900.
- The **NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors – STARTTS.** Call (02) 9646 6700.
- **Settlement Services International – SSI.** Call (02) 8799 6700.

