

# HOW TO SUPPORT A VICTIM-SURVIVOR

VOICE Sexual and Relationship Violence  
Prevention & Survivor Support Initiative  
[voice.gatech.edu](http://voice.gatech.edu)

## 1 LISTEN AND SUPPORT

- Being there to listen, believe and support a victim-survivor in a positive way can greatly influence their healing process.
- Be non-judgmental and offer emotional comfort.
- Listen and let them go at their own pace.
- Don't rush to provide solutions.

## 2 BELIEVE YOUR FRIEND

- Believe what your friend tells you. It may have been difficult to talk to you and trust you.
- Don't ask questions that imply you don't believe them or that it is their fault like how much they were drinking or why they did or did not do something.

## 3 REASSURE

- Reassure the survivor that what happened was not their fault.
- The survivor needs to hear that it is normal to feel afraid, anxious, guilty, angry, sad, confused and even numb. A survivor's feelings can feel like a roller coaster and there is no right or wrong way to react.

## 4 BE PATIENT

- Don't press for details or pressure them about what to do. Ask them how you can help.
- Help your friend explore their options and decide what is right for them.
- Continue to follow up. Recovery is a process and each individual heals at their own pace.

## 5 ENCOURAGE

- Encourage the survivor to seek medical attention and to contact VOICE but let them decide.
- Offer to help them contact a VOICE Advocate or to seek other services. Reaching out for help can be hard. You can also go with them to meet with a VOICE Advocate.

## 6 RESPECT PRIVACY

- Don't tell others what the survivor tells you. One exception involves suicide. Seek support immediately.
- Don't confront the perpetrator. Though you might want to fix the situation or get back at the perpetrator, this could make things worse, for you and your friend.

## 7 THINGS YOU CAN SAY

- It's not your fault
- I'm sorry this happened
- How can I support you?
- I am here for you no matter what you decide to do
- You're not alone
- I believe you

## 8 GET SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF

- Hearing about sexual violence can be upsetting and can also bring up situations from your past too. You too can contact VOICE and speak to an advocate confidentially to get help for yourself.