



Rape Crisis Cape Town, South Africa

INFORMATION FOR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND SUPPORTERS OF RAPE SURVIVORS

Rape is such a traumatic experience that people who want to help are usually desperate to do something concrete to make the all of the pain just disappear. This is because it is so difficult to watch someone that you care about live through such pain.

Sometimes a supporter is so desperate for the woman to get better that the woman starts to feel guilty and starts to hide her feelings from the supporter to make the supporter feel better.

Luckily it is not too difficult to avoid this, some of the most important things that you can do to help include:

DO:

- **Let her talk** as much as she wants to AND LISTEN. Don't make her talk if she doesn't want to.
- Try to **understand her**.
- **Let her make her own decisions** she has just experienced a situation where her control has been forcefully taken away from her. Once she starts to make her own decisions, she is able to start feeling that she is in control of her life again. Even if you think her decisions are wrong, don't force her into doing what you want her to do or think that she should do. Rather encourage her to regain her sense of self and control.
- **Give her time**. She is not going to feel better overnight. It is often difficult to have the patience to let her heal at her own pace, but she knows how long she needs.
- **Let her know how you feel**. You don't need to hide your feelings from her, it can help her to know that you understand her.
- What she tells you may shock, scare or hurt you, let her know it's okay to feel the way she does, even though it may hurt your feelings. Try not to be scared of your emotions, you will be able to concentrate on her more once you understand your own reactions.
- **Phone Rape Crisis** or another help line if you are feeling worried or are not sure of what to do or if you just want to talk to someone, you may also need support.

DON'T:

- **Don't judge her** - this will not make her feel that she can trust you.
- **Don't make her support you**. Although it is good to let her know how you feel, it is important that you don't make her feel that she must help you to feel better, she needs to concentrate on making herself feel better right now.
- **Don't tell her to get over it**. Or that it's not so bad.
- **Don't tell other people**. Unless she has given you permission.
- **DON'T BLAME HER**

Remember, rape is not the woman's fault it is the rapist's. - So don't blame her, BLAME THE RAPIST.