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Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Dedicated to Healing.

Advocating for Change.

First Response: A Guide for Sexual Assault Disclosures



Safety:

- Immediate physical concerns
- Immediate emotional concerns
- Privacy
- Confidentiality



Empower:

- Let the survivor decide what to talk about
- Normalize their reactions
- Provide options
- Be respectful of their decisions
- Be aware of your language (see other side of handout)



Empathize:

- Believe the survivor
- Put yourself in their shoes
- Validate their experiences



Know:

- Know your role
- Be prepared
- Utilize what is available

Empowerment 101

The following sentences are well intentioned but phrased in a way that is disempowering. Rewrite them so that they are supportive, informative, and help survivors make their own decisions.

Example: What did your mother say when you told her?

Have you shared this with anyone? Is there someone that you think would be supportive?

1. When are you going to report it?

2. You should go to the hospital.

3. Obviously, you'll want STI prophylaxis.

4. What I think you should do first is call the hotline.

5. I don't think this can be reported.

6. How can you avoid the offender from now on?

7. Let's talk about making your situation safer.

8. It's great that you want to help, but your friend really needs counseling.