

How to Help as a Parent

Believe your child

Believe your child when they confide in you. Don't pressure them to talk. It is better to go slowly and let them set the pace. Listen and help them process through their feelings. Validate their anger, pain, and fear. These are natural responses that need to be felt, expressed, and heard. It is okay to tell your child that this is a difficult topic for you to talk about. Let them know that you are open to talk about anything, even if it is uncomfortable.



Do not place blame

Do not blame your child, or yourself. Avoid asking "why" questions as much as possible because these often imply blame. Focus on their needs. If they didn't tell you immediately about the assault, listen to their reasons. It is very common for survivors to wait before sharing with people they love. Reassure them that they have your love and support.



Recognize the need for privacy

Recognize your child's need for privacy. Their boundaries have been violated and reclaiming personal space is important. Respect the time and space it takes to heal after a sexual assault.



Practice self-care

Take care of yourself. Educate yourself about sexual assault and the healing process. Realize when you've reached your own limitations. Find a supportive person or counselor with whom you can share your strong feelings with so that your conversations with your son or daughter can focus on their needs.



Protect & ensure safety

Take the necessary steps to protect and ensure your child's safety. Encourage them to seek medical attention, or alternative housing if necessary. Understand that your child has the right to decide what steps are necessary to take. It's important that your child regain a sense of control. Sexual assault is a crime that takes away an individual's power. It can make them feel invaded, changed, and out of control. It is crucial for survivors to be able to make their own decisions in order to regain power over their own lives.



Help them get professional help

Make sure your child gets the professional care and support they may need. Counseling can be very helpful in assisting your child through the healing process of coping with the sexual assault. Remember that every person's healing process is unique. Seek immediate professional help if your child displays any suicidal behaviors or if you are worried about their emotional or physical well-being. MIT Victim Advocates are available 24/7 at the Violence Prevention & Response office by calling 617-253-2300.



Discuss options

Discuss with your child their options and ask them what they want to do next. This may or may not include contacting a counselor, advocate, judicial officer and/or the police. Reporting a sexual assault crime can be a very difficult, long, and painful process for survivors. It is not an appropriate option for everyone, but a trained advocate can help you both navigate through their options.

Adapted from information provided by the [Boston Area Rape Crisis Center \(BARCC\)](#).

