



Tool 3.4: Responding with compassion – talking to a person who has been sexually assaulted²⁰

Three key things to say

Say...	This is heard as...
I am sorry for what has happened.	I believe you.
What happened is a crime.	This is not your fault.
I will do what I can to help.	You are not alone.

Initial response

Do	Do not
Listen to the story.	Tell them what to do or try to take over.
Let them express how they feel.	Ask them the ‘why’ questions, why they were there, went there, why they trusted him. <i>Why questions are blame questions.</i>
Let them cry.	Get angry on their behalf. <i>They have enough to deal with without worrying about you.</i>
Encourage them.	Assume you know how they feel. <i>Everyone experiences sexual assault differently</i>
Not worry if parts of the story don’t add up.	
Tell them you are sorry for what happened.	
Explain what you can do.	

20 Responding with compassion when someone says ‘I have been sexually assaulted’, Fact sheet, Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia.