

SEXUAL ASSAULT:
A GUIDE FOR
FAMILIES AND
LOVED ONES OF
SURVIVORS



By
Nancy Tavolacci

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A meditation...

“Peace of mind is a jewel looked for in the worst of times and the best of times. It is the feeling we get when we turn from a busy highway to a secluded spot along a country lane. Peace is supertime when the sunset gilds every window and a quiet contentment makes man and nature akin. It is a warm bath, a soft pillow, a shaft of sunlight that touches the spirit. All of these things make a difference, the kind words, the gentleness, the sleepy midnight song of a whippoorwill. But most of all, it is hearing something we believe when it is hard to believe in anything. It is knowing that things can work out, peace does come and life is worth living...”

*-Joyce Sequichie Hifler
from A Cherokee Feast of Days*

A dedication...

To a most dedicated, compassionate staff and a most courageous group of survivors and loved ones at the UCSF/San Francisco General Hospital Trauma Recovery Center/Rape Treatment Center, without whom this guide would not have come to life.

A special acknowledgment...

To Miriam Levine-Alcalá and Linda Brewer, professors at San Francisco State University, for their time, energy, and leadership on this project.

Send-In Evaluation

Please take few moments to fill out and send in this short evaluation.

1. How **helpful** overall was this guide? (Choose one)
Not at all Somewhat Very Extremely
2. How **difficult** was the language to understand? (Choose one)
Not at all Somewhat Very Extremely
3. How **relevant** was the information provided in this guide? (Choose one)
Not at all Somewhat Very Extremely
4. What would you **suggest adding or removing** from the content of the guide?
5. Any further comments?

Please send your comments to:
UCSF/SFGH
Trauma Recovery Center/Rape Treatment Center
2727 Mariposa St. Suite 100
San Francisco, CA 94110

Videos:

Confronting Date Rape: The Girls Room (1999). South Charleston, WV: Cambridge Educational.

Give it All You've Got. (1984) UCSF Rape Prevention Education Program. (*self-defense video*)

Male Rape. (1997) Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

The Rape Drug: A New Menace. (1998) Princeton, NJ: Live Water Television / a presentation of Films for the Humanities and Sciences.

Waking up to Rape. (1985) NY: Meridian Productions / Women Make Movies. (*personal accounts of survivors, prevention, and self-defense*)

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www.ocadsv.org (Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence) – Provides links to sexual assault/ domestic violence coalitions, alliances state by state

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs (Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics) – statistics on violent crime in U.S.

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc (Dept. of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime) Info about crime victim financial compensation and directory by state

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vamo (Dept. of Justice, Office on Violence against Women) – links to resources

www.scbw.org - (Statewide California Coalition for Battered Women)

www.survivingtothriving.org- Website created by survivor “Help and hope for healing” – personal accounts, poetry, suggestions for loved ones of survivors

www.survivorslegalrights.com – Legal Info

www.uhs.berkeley.edu/services/sexualassault - Info on sexual assault; drug-facilitated

www.wholehuman.com - You can order a copy of self-help booklet entitled “Male survivors: A self help booklet” by Gadi Zohar, MA, MFT.

www.womenslaw.org - Legal info for girls and women living with or escaping domestic violence

Scarce, Michael. (1997) *Male on Male Rape: the Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame*. NY, NY: Insight Books.

Warshaw, Robin. (1988) *I Never Called it Rape*. NY, NY: Harper & Row, Pubs, Inc.

Selected Online (Internet) Resources:

www.arte-sana.com - "Art Heals" - Art gallery
Using creative arts to heal from sexual assault

www.calcasa.org (California Coalition Against Sexual Assault) - Provides directory of Rape Crisis Centers throughout California.

www.escapinghades.com - Website created by survivor of sexual assault.

www.mcadsv.org (Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence) - Provides info for survivors and loved ones

www.ncptsd.org (National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Department of Veterans Affairs) - Provides info on effects of sexual assault on men and women survivors and their families and loved ones.

www.nsvrc.org (National Sexual Violence Resources Center) - links to sexual assault coalitions by state

I. Introduction – Rape & Sexual Assault

As recently as the year 2001, 1 in 1000 persons, aged twelve years or older, was the victim of a sexual assault or rape in the U.S. (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs). The Department of Justice estimates that a woman is sexually assaulted in the United States every two minutes. Approximately one out of every six women in the U.S. has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape during their lifetime. One out of every ten rape victims is male. (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) There is no question that rape and sexual assault are wide-spread social problems in this country that have devastating effects on hundreds of thousands of women, men, children, and their loved ones each year.

For survivors of a sexual assault or rape, the psychological effects of anxiety, depression, and the many symptoms that accompany Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can be intense and debilitating. The shame, self blame, and isolation that survivors feel can be very painful. The ongoing recovery from this traumatic experience is often a difficult process. An important part of this recovery process is the support that family, friends, and loved ones can provide to survivors. (Ruch & Leon, 1983; Frank & Stewart, 1983; Burgess & Holmstrom, 1979) It is not always easy, however for either survivors or their loved ones to understand the effects that a trauma such as rape can have on the individual and her/his relationships. As a family member, friend, or loved one, it is difficult to know how to be supportive at the time of crisis and throughout the recovery process.

II. Who is this booklet for? Why the need for this type of guide?

This guide is for **parents, brothers, sisters, adult children, extended family members, boyfriends, girlfriends, partners, spouses, friends, and co-workers** of adults who have been sexually assaulted or raped. It is important for families and loved ones of sexual assault survivors to be informed, to be sensitive to their loved one's needs, and to feel supported themselves at a time when their world seems turned upside down as a result of this traumatic event. This guide begins to address some of these issues:

- (1) To provide you, the families, friends, and loved ones of survivors, with a practical resource that is informative and supportive. **Rape is a crime of violence** that affects not only the victims, but also those who are close to them. Understanding and integrating this experience into one's life and relationship with the survivor can be frightening, distressing, and challenging to say the least. You, the families and loved ones, will likely have very strong reactions and feelings about the rape. **Your personal reactions may be those of shock, disbelief, sadness, fear, rage, revenge, guilt, loss...** many of the same feelings that your loved one is experiencing. Just as the survivor needs support, you too may need support as you help him/her through the process of recovery. **And yes, it is possible for both you and your loved one to recover from a sexual assault.**
- (2) To help you to be a sensitive support to your

Beneke, Timothy. (1982) *Men on Rape*. NY, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Brownmiller, Susan. (1976) *Against our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. NY, NY: Bantam Books.

Francisco, Patricia Weaver. (1999) *Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*. NY, NY: Cliff Street Books.

Grossman, Rochel & Joan Sutherland, eds. (1991). *Surviving Sexual Assault*. Chicago, IL: Congdon & Weed, Inc.

Katz, Judy H. (1984) *No Fairy Godmothers, No Magic Wands: the Healing Process after Rape*. CA: R & E Publishers.

Ledray, Linda E. (1994) *Recovering from Rape*, 2nd Ed. NY, NY: Henry Holt & Co.

Levine, Robert Larry. (1996) *When you are the Partner of a Rape or Incest Survivor: A Workbook for You*. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications.

Matsakis, Aphrodite. (1998) *Trust After Trauma: A Guide to Relationships for Survivors and those who Love them*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

McEvoy, A & J. Brookings. (1984) *If She is Raped: A Book for Husbands, Fathers, and Male Friends*. Florida: Learning Publications, Inc.

Pierce-Baker, Charlotte. (1998) *Surviving the Silence: Black Women's Stories of Rape*. NY, NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Santa Clara County:
775 N 1st St. Suite 220
San Jose, CA 95112
(408) 295-2656

Solano County:
Hall of Justice
600 Union Ave.
Fairfield, CA 94533
or
321 Tuolomne St.
Vallejo, CA 94590

Sonoma County:
1000 Coddington Rd. Suite 101
Santa Rosa, CA 95401
(707) 527-2002

For all other California Counties, go to:
www.cya.ca.gov/victim/vw_county.html

For all other states:
Contact your local District Attorney's office

Selected Books on Sexual Assault and Rape:

Adams, Caren & Jennifer Fay. (1989) *Free of the Shadows: Recovering from Sexual Violence*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Benedict, Helen. (1994) *Recovery: How to Survive Sexual Assault for Women, Men, Teenagers, their Families and Friends*. NY, NY: Columbia University Press.

one. **Research has shown that how supportively or non-supportively families, friends, and partners react to the disclosure of a loved one's sexual assault makes a big difference in how well the survivor recovers.** Given accurate information and tools to support survivors, you may be better able to handle the **psychological, practical, and relationship stressors that often arise as a result of a sexual assault.** This is not to say that there are any "perfect" responses or "ideal" ways of adjusting to life after rape. However, with knowledge, understanding, and support, we may all help survivors and ourselves to develop healthier ways of coping with this traumatic experience.

- (3) To inspire and create dialogue between you and your loved one. **Sometimes it is hard to know how and when to talk about something as painful and emotional as rape with someone whom you care about. Those are common concerns.** We all hope that nothing like this would ever happen to someone we love. Thus, we are often not prepared to deal with this topic. With the help of this guide, the goal is that you may feel better prepared to open up a supportive conversation and communication channel with the survivor.
- (4) To direct you towards additional sources of information and resources in the community where both you and your loved one may get further assistance in coping with sexual assault. This booklet will hopefully serve as an entryway into getting additional support for you and the survivor through your personal journeys of recovery.

III. Legal definitions and facts about rape and sexual assault

What is rape?

Each state differs in its definitions of rape and sexual assault. In California, the crime of rape is defined more specifically than sexual assault in the California Penal Code Section 261. According to this state code, rape is “an act of sexual intercourse accomplished with a person not the spouse of the perpetrator under any of the following circumstances: [Note: there is a special code for rape by a spouse]

1. Where a person is incapable, because of a mental disorder or developmental or physical disability, of giving legal consent, and this is known or reasonably should be known to the person committing the act.
2. Where it is accomplished against a person’s will by means of force, duress, menace, or fear of immediate and unlawful bodily injury on the person of another.
3. Where a person is prevented from resisting by any intoxicating or anesthetic substance, or controlled substance, and this condition is known, or reasonably should have been known by the accused.*
4. Where a person is at the time unconscious of the nature of the act, and this is known to the accused.
5. Where a person submits under the belief that the person committing the act is the victim’s spouse, and this belief is induced by any artifice, pretense,

Bay Area Victim-Witness Assistance Offices:

Alameda County:
1401 Lakeside Dr. Suite 802
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 272-6180

Contra Costa County:
50 Douglas Dr. Suite 202
Martinez, CA 94553 (510) 313-4170
or
2555 El Portal Dr. San Pablo, CA 94806
(510) 372-3272

Marin County:
3501 Civic Center Dr.
San Rafael, CA 94903
(415) 499-6450

San Francisco County:
Hall of Justice
850 Bryant St. Room 320
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 553-9046

San Mateo County:
2415 University Ave.
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
(650) 363-7809
or
1024 Mission Rd.
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(650) 877-5494

San Francisco Women Against Rape

3543 18th Street, #7

San Francisco, CA 94110

Crisis Hotline: (415) 647-7273

Office Phone: (415) 861-2024

Website: www.sfwar.org

United Against Sexual Assault Sonoma County

835 Piner Rd. Suite D

Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Crisis Hotline: (707) 545-7273

Office Phone: (707) 545-7270

YWCA Assault and Prevention Services

375 S. 3rd St.

San Jose, CA 95112

Crisis Hotline: (408) 287-3000

Office Phone: (408) 295-4011

Domestic Violence Shelters in San Francisco:**Asian Women's Shelter****24 hrs. (415) 751-0880****La Casa de Las Madres****24 hrs. 1-877-503-1850****Rosalie House Emergency Shelter****24 hrs. (415) 255-0165****W.O.M.A.N. Inc.**

Clearinghouse for shelter availability for SF Bay

Area- also restraining orders

24 hrs. 1-877-384-3578

or concealment practiced by the accused, with the intent to induce the belief.

6. Where the act is accomplished against the victim's will by threatening to retaliate in the future against the victim or any other person, and there is a reasonable possibility that the perpetrator will execute the threat. "

***Drug Facilitated Rape** - It is important to note that the legal definition of rape includes sex that takes place when the victim is too altered by drugs or alcohol to give their consent. While a sexual assault can happen while the victim is aware that s/he is under the influence of a substance, it may also happen that the perpetrator has intentionally slipped a drug into the victim's drink or food. Drugs such as GHB, Rohypnol ("ruffies"), and Ketamine (Special K) are known as common "date rape" drugs. These drugs are very strong and have sedative qualities that may make a person lose consciousness for several hours or more. These drugs affect a person's judgment and short-term memory, making it difficult or impossible to make safe decisions, to protect one's self, or to get help if assaulted. When a perpetrator uses any kind of substance to intentionally overpower his victim, it is called drug-facilitated rape.

This type of assault can have emotional consequences different from a rape in which the victim is fully conscious. The victim may never remember or be clear on what happened while s/he was unconscious. It is difficult to have a sense of closure on an experience that one doesn't remember. Like an unresolved disappearance or death, the family and loved ones are left wondering just what happened and how much damage was done. Further

safety planning and community education are needed to prevent drug-facilitated sexual assaults from happening. Many college campuses and college health center websites have good information on this topic.

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault refers to any unwanted sexual contact committed against a person. Sexual contact includes things like sexual touching or molestation and sexual acts committed with an object. *Forced oral or anal sex is considered as serious a crime as forced vaginal rape.*

Here are some **FACTS** about sexual assault and rape:

- Victims / survivors of rape and sexual assault come from all neighborhoods, all ethnic groups, all age groups, all income brackets, all levels of intellectual and physical ability, all genders, and all sexual orientations.
- Despite the myths that exist about rape being a crime committed by strangers in dark alleys or bushes, only about 30% of perpetrators of rape and sexual assault are unknown to the victim. The other **70% of perpetrators are friends, acquaintances, partners or spouses, co-workers or supervisors, dates, or other people that the victim knows.** Most rapes take place in or around the victim's own home or the home of a friend, neighbor, or relative. (National Crime Victim Survey, 2000)

Contra Costa Main Office

2101 Van Ness St.
San Pablo, CA 94806
Crisis Hotline: (510) 236-7273
Office Phone: (510) 237-0113

Marin County Main Office

734 A St. Suite #3
San Rafael, CA 94901
Crisis Hotline: 1-800-670-7273
Office Phone: (415) 259-2850

Mid-Peninsula Rape Crisis Center

YWCA
4161 Alma St.
Palo Alto, CA 94306
Crisis Hotline: (650) 493-7273 or (408) 245-3414
Office Phone: (650) 493-0993

Rape Trauma Services

1860 El Camino Real Suite 301
Burlingame, CA 94010
Crisis Hotline: (650) 692-7273
Office Phone: (650) 652-0598

Safe Quest Solano

1745 Enterprise Dr. Suite 2D
Fairfield, CA 94533
Crisis Hotlines:
Fairfield (707) 422-7273 or (707) 425-7422
Vallejo (707) 644-7273 or (707) 557-6600
Office Phone: (707) 422-7345

North Bay Hospital
1800 Pennsylvania Ave.
Fairfield, CA 94553

SONOMA COUNTY:
Sutter Warrack Hospital
2449 Summerfield Rd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95405

Bay Area Rape Crisis Centers:

All rape crisis centers have phone counselors available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide immediate emotional support to survivors and their loved ones, and can refer you to support services including emergency shelters, basic needs assistance, legal assistance, temporary protective orders, counseling, and other community services. They may also offer peer support groups. Don't hesitate to call. If you and/or the survivor speak another language besides English, ask the hotline counselor for interpretation services or for a referral to another hotline where they can assist you in your language of choice.

Bay Area Women Against Rape
357 MacArthur Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94610
Crisis Hotline: (510) 845-7273
Office phone: (510) 430-1298

Community Violence Solutions
6 locations in Contra Costa and Marin Counties
Crisis Hotline for all: 1-800-670-7273

- **Rape and sexual assault are crimes of violence**, not crimes of passion or sex. These crimes of violence are used to overpower and control another human being. Rapists control their victims through physical force, the use of a weapon, threats, intimidation, or any combination of those things mentioned.
- **Rape and sexual assault by definition are non-consensual**, meaning the victim did not agree to or was **manipulated** or **forced** into having sexual relations, was under the influence of a substance, or was not able for some other reason to give their consent or permission, or was forced to continue to engage in sexual acts against her/his will.
- **Rape and sexual assault are not provoked by the victim**. It doesn't matter what the victim was wearing, that s/he was flirting, where and when s/he was walking in the street, that s/he was drinking, or even that s/he was a sex worker, trading sex for money for a living. If s/he was forced to engage at any time in unwanted sexual activity, s/he was the victim of sexual assault.
- **Rape is a felony**, but a perpetrator can only be arrested and charged with the crime if the victim or a witness to the crime reports it to the police. The criminal(s) who committed this act of violence can be prosecuted only if the victim is willing to follow through with legal proceedings.

IV. You've just found out your loved one has been sexually assaulted or raped...

Immediately following the assault, S/HE might be feeling:

- Confused
- Fearful about personal safety
- Angry or irritable
- Powerless / helpless
- Ashamed
- Depressed / sad
- Jumpy / anxious
- Numb / shut down from feelings

Upon learning of the assault YOU, the friend, partner, or family member, might be feeling:

- Shocked
- Confused
- Frustrated / helpless
- Guilty that you couldn't protect her/him
- Angry at her/him, or at the rapist
- Wanting revenge on the rapist
- Sad / hurt
- Ashamed
- Very protective of her/him

Note: These are just some of the common reactions of victims and loved ones. Any and all of these feelings are understandable at a time like this. You may be feeling other things as well. Feelings may be intense and may

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY:
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center
 2500 Alhambra Ave.
 Martinez, CA 94553

Doctor's Medical Center
 2000 Vale Rd.
 San Pablo, CA 94806

MARIN COUNTY:
Marin General Hospital
 250 Bon Air Rd.
 Greenbrae, CA

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY:
San Francisco General Hospital
Trauma Recovery Center / Rape Treatment Center
 1001 Potrero Ave.
 San Francisco, CA 94110

SAN MATEO COUNTY:
San Mateo Medical Center
 222 W. 39th Ave.
 San Mateo, CA 94403

SANTA CLARA COUNTY:
San Jose Valley Medical Center
 751 S. Boscom Ave.
 San Jose, CA 95128

SOLANO COUNTY:
Sutter Solano Medical Center
 300 Hospital Drive
 Vallejo, CA 94589

VIII. Listing of Resources for Survivors, Families, Loved Ones

National 24-hour Hotlines:

These toll-free hotlines will connect you with rape crisis and domestic violence services in your area:

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
 website: www.rainn.org

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
 website: www.ndvh.org

Community Resources for Survivors and Loved Ones in the San Francisco Bay Area:

Bay Area Hospital Sexual Assault Treatment Centers:
 These Bay Area hospital emergency rooms are designated sexual assault treatment centers and perform forensic (evidence collecting) exams. Victims should go directly to the emergency room:

ALAMEDA COUNTY:
Highland Hospital
Highland Sexual Assault Response Team
 1411 E. 31st St.
 Oakland, CA 94602
 (510) 534-9290 / (510) 534-9291 (24 hours/ 7 days)

come up “out of the blue”. Know that neither you nor your loved one is crazy or abnormal for feeling the way you do.

Try to be aware of your own feelings. You may be too overwhelmed at this time to be as helpful as you would like to be. Your loved one might be more worried about you right now and your reactions to the assault than s/he is about her/himself. S/he may be worried about burdening you. This worry, however, takes the focus away from the victim and from getting her/himself through the crisis. If you notice yourself being overwhelmed to the point at which your loved one is needing to take care of you right now, you may want to help her/him call on others to provide her/him with support at this time.

Remember, these intense feelings CAN and should get better over time and with support. Remind yourself and your loved one that you CAN get through this.

Here are some ways to support your loved one at this time:

► **Believe her/him** – This is a traumatic and painful time for your loved one. S/he needs you to listen and believe what s/he is saying is true. Tell her/him directly, “This was not your fault. No one deserves to be hurt like this.”

► **Be a comforting presence** – This can mean accompanying her/him to the hospital, sitting by her/his side during a medical exam or during police questioning, giving a hug or holding hands if s/he feels okay about it. *Be aware that affection and touching may or may not provide comfort right now. Don’t take it personally if s/he

does not want to be touched. S/he has just been physically and emotionally violated.

► **Help her/him take care of basic needs** – This can mean making sure your loved one eats if s/he is hungry, and gets some sleep. Also, make sure that s/he gets some kind of medical care. Your local trauma center emergency room is the best place to go if s/he was recently assaulted or raped. (For the San Francisco Bay area, see listing of hospitals that are designated for sexual assault exams at the back of this guide)

► **Help to ensure safety** – Help her/him find a safe place to stay if necessary, or offer to stay with her/him for a while if possible. It is important that s/he feel a supportive presence right now. If s/he fears that the rapist may actually try to harm her/him again, help her/him come up with a safety plan which should include calling the police if s/he is in danger, filing for an Emergency Protective Order, and going to a shelter or other safe place to stay.

► **Be a sensitive listener** – Let her/him know that it's okay to cry, shout, be silent, talk it out – that it's okay to feel whatever it is s/he is feeling, and that you are there to listen when or if s/he wants to talk. If s/he doesn't want to talk right away, let your loved one know that you respect that, and that you will be there when s/he feels like talking.

► **Express your concern, caring, and love for her/him** – Let her know that s/he is safe now and you are glad that s/he has gotten out of that dangerous situation and is alive.

Ruch, L.O., & Leon, J.J. (1983). Sexual assault trauma and trauma change. *Women and Health*, 8(4), 5-21.

Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, Nancy (November, 2000). Full report of the prevalence, incidence, and consequences of violence against women. Washington, D.C.: The National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Ullman, S.E. (1996). Social reactions, coping strategies, and self-blame attributions in adjustment to sexual assault. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 505-526.

www.ncptsd.org (National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Department of Veterans Affairs)

www.uhs.berkeley.edu/services/sexualassault - Info on sexual assault; drug-facilitated

References

The information in this guide was compiled from interviews with the nurse practitioners and mental health clinicians at the UCSF Trauma Recovery Center / Rape Treatment Center at San Francisco General Hospital, as well as a review of the literature on sexual assault and rape from the following sources:

Adams, Caren & Jennifer Fay. (1989) *Free of the Shadows: Recovering from Sexual Violence*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Benedict, Helen (1994). *Recovery: How to survive sexual assault for women, men, teenagers, their friends and families*. New York: Columbia.

Burgess, A.W. & Holmstrom, L.L. (1979). Rape: The husband's and boyfriend's initial reaction. *The Family Coordinator*, 28 (2), 321-330.

Frank, E. & Stewart, B.D. (1983). Treatment of depressed rape victims: An approach to stress-induced symptomology. In P.J. Clayton & J.E. Barrett (Eds.), *Treatment of depression: Old controversies and new approaches*. New York: Raven.

Herman, Judith (1997). *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic.

Ledray, Linda E. (1994) *Recovering from Rape*, 2nd Ed. NY, NY: Henry Holt & Co.

► **Don't push her/him for details** – If s/he was seen at an emergency room and/or the police are involved, they will have already done a lot of questioning about the incident. Your loved one may not be able now, or ever, to tell you the painful details of the assault. You may be able though, with your loved one's permission, to ask the medical personnel or police for additional information.

► **Be unconditionally supportive** – Do not accuse, blame, or judge your loved one for any of the circumstances around the rape. This is not the time to say, for example, "Why were you hanging out in that area at night?" or "That's what happens when you drink too much!" or "You should have known better!" These statements are not only extremely painful, but may in fact traumatize your loved one all over again. It is likely that s/he is already feeling a great deal of shame and/or personal responsibility for what has happened. Being unconditionally supportive at this time is the first step to helping your loved one to heal.

***Note:** Overall, a supportive loved one listens to what the survivor feels and needs right now and is emotionally and physically present. Try not to take your loved one's silence, reactions, or behaviors personally. Remember, however that you don't have to be perfect in your responses or in your way of relating to your loved one.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO ADDRESS at this time:

Getting Immediate Medical Attention

What happens during a sexual assault exam?

Sexual assault exams usually take place at hospital emergency rooms by specially trained nurses, physicians'

assistants, and/or doctors. Your local police department and rape crisis centers will know which hospitals are designated rape treatment facilities for your area. Note: Your loved one may always go to any emergency room for immediate medical care following a sexual assault.

At rape treatment facilities, specially trained medical personnel will do the following:

- 1- Explain what s/he will do during an exam
- 2- Care for and document any injuries your loved one may have
- 3- Examine the areas of the body where the s/he was assaulted
- 4- Provide information, testing, and medication to help prevent an unwanted pregnancy and lower her/his risk of getting HIV or another sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- 5- Look for and collect evidence of the sexual assault if the victim agrees. This includes bagging her/his underwear and possibly other articles of clothing, collecting pubic hair with a comb, collecting a sample of body fluids, taking pictures of the genitals and any other areas affected by the assault
- 6- Provide information on crisis counseling / therapy, community services and resources. A social worker, rape crisis counselor, or victim-witness advocate will likely be present to provide support to you and your loved one at the hospital, and direct you towards additional community services and resources. You and/or your loved one may not remember all of this information when you hear it. Make sure that

you. It's okay to ask for professional help. You can unload some of those intense feelings you may have, and learn skills to help you accept and integrate this traumatic experience into your life. Many private therapists (marriage and family therapists or "MFTs", licensed clinical social workers or "LCSWs", psychologists) and community mental health clinics/agencies can provide professional individual, couples, family, and group therapy.

Rape crisis centers can provide 24-hour telephone crisis counseling by trained volunteers and/or professionals and will provide you and your loved one with referrals to individual therapists. Many rape crisis centers also offer peer support groups as well. (See listing of resources at the end of this guide for rape crisis hotlines) Your church or local community center may have support groups available as well.

worried or preoccupied with her/his safety. Consult with a doctor if you or your loved one has disturbed sleep for more than two weeks. A doctor may be able to suggest things you can do to help you sleep better or, if needed, prescribe medication to help you sleep.

► **Recognizing when you are emotionally drained** -

Supporting someone who has been raped, especially someone who you are very close to, is a difficult job. It can be emotionally draining. It is important for you to recognize when this is happening. It does neither you, nor your loved one, any good when you are so overwhelmed that you cannot take care of yourself.

You may need a break. The survivor may need a break as well. That's okay. You may need to set some limits with your loved one on how much you discuss the assault. Some loved ones and survivors set aside a particular time in the day or week to talk about the assault. Try also to engage in different activities with the survivor, activities that don't involve talking about the rape.

You may find yourself needing to limit how much time you spend with your loved one. If you've been spending all of your free time with the survivor, you may want to consider spending time with other friends or family, having your own support from others. Decide on a plan that works for you and the survivor, one that enables you to meet both of your needs. You CAN be supportive AND take care of yourself at the same time.

► **Getting professional help** - Therapy, counseling, and support groups can provide a neutral space in which you can discuss how the rape of your loved one has affected

you leave the hospital with some written material to look at later on, as well as the phone numbers of police, social workers, and anyone else involved at the time of crisis.

- 7- Set up another medical follow up appointment to check on how the victim is feeling physically in the days to come

Reporting to the Police

Your loved one may or may not want to report the crime to the police. Opening up a sex crimes case is a long and difficult process. Your loved one may not feel emotionally or physically up to it at this time or in the future. S/he may have reasons for not wanting to report the assault such as shame of what happened, or fear that the rapist may come after her/him. S/he may also fear or distrust the police and/or the legal system. These can be realistic fears and concerns. At the same time, if this crime isn't reported, the rapist may hurt others. Help your loved one weigh the possible risks and benefits of reporting or not reporting. Try not to pressure her/him. You and/or your loved one can talk to the medical staff at the hospital, advocates at the rape crisis center or your local legal aid center to find out more information about the legal process. The medical staff may be able to hold evidence from the exam before handing it to the police if your loved one wants some time to think about it.

V. Now that the crisis has settled...

Psychological Effects of Sexual Assault and Rape

Sexual assault and rape, like other types of trauma, is likely to have some psychological effects on your loved one. Adjusting to life after a sexual violation takes time. Some people have a greater resiliency, or ability to take on life's difficulties and tragedies, than others. Others have suffered traumatic experiences before and may or may not have worked through them. Still others have a history of mental illness that makes them more vulnerable to psychological distress. These factors will have an influence on how a person handles the aftermath of her/his assault. It is important that you, as the loved one of the survivor, take notice of how s/he is coping with the assault and whether or not s/he is moving forward in her/his recovery process.

Some common psychological difficulties that are associated with rape and sexual assault are **depression, Acute Stress Disorder (ASD), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. While not every survivor will suffer from these problems, they are psychological responses that are expected after sexual assault or rape, and may be thought of as normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Your loved one is not crazy. Let them know that!

Below, you will find a list of signs and symptoms of these three common responses to sexual trauma. If you notice that your loved one is showing these signs and they are interfering with her/his ability to function on a daily basis, it may indicate that s/he needs professional mental health

very stressful or traumatic happened to you in the past. It may have been a death in the family, the loss a job, your own sexual assault or rape, or a serious medical illness to name a few. Think back to how you got through that hard time. What helped you feel better? If it was drugs, alcohol, or other harmful or risky behaviors, you may want to think of more healthy ways of taking care of yourself. Here are some healthier self-care activities to consider for both you and your loved one:

► **Sources of Strength** - You may be a person that finds comfort in your spirituality or religion. Praying, going to church, or participating in other cultural/spiritual ceremonies or traditions provides a source of strength and healing for some people.

► **Pleasurable Activities** - Doing a favorite activity, painting or drawing, reading, writing in a journal, exercising, watching movies, dancing, cooking, meditating, taking long hot baths, or other enjoyable activities, is a way to start to feel better.

► **Eating well** - During hard times it is very important that you are eating nutritional meals. Our bodies and minds work hand in hand. Taking care of your body is an important step in taking care of your emotional needs after a trauma.

► **Sleeping** - Try to sleep enough to feel rested. Sleep is often difficult for survivors of a recent sexual assault, because of nightmares or recurring thoughts about the incident or the person that assaulted them. You may also have a hard time sleeping if you share a bed with the survivor and are waking up when s/he does, or if you are

VII. Getting help for you and your loved one

Victims of Crime Compensation - Financial Assistance

Every state has a special fund for victims of crime to help pay for any expenses associated with the crime. Victims of Crime Compensation may be able to pay for medical bills, mental health counseling / therapy, lost wages, emergency housing, moving expenses, security system installation or change of locks, all related to the assault. Contact your local victim-witness assistance office in your county district attorney's office to apply for assistance. (See resources at the end of this guide for San Francisco Bay Area victim-witness offices)

Assistance with legal process – Your local victim-witness assistance office can also help you through the legal process of the criminal case if your loved one decides to follow up on charges against the perpetrator. They can provide you and your loved one with the information and support you need about steps to take and act as advocates in court if your loved one has to testify against the perpetrator. The legal process can be lengthy and overwhelming, often bringing up painful memories of the assault or rape. The outcome can be disappointing – cases get closed for lack of evidence, juries make decisions in favor of the perpetrator. On the other hand, the outcome can also be empowering and gratifying. A positive outcome for the victim can truly restore that person's sense of safety, ability to have control in their lives, and belief in justice in the world.

Self Care for You and the Survivor

We all have our own personal ways of getting through hard times. Try to think back to a time when something

counseling and may also benefit from medications that can help reduce distressing symptoms after a sexual assault.

Signs of Depression

- Isolating from others; i.e. not wanting to leave the house, staying alone more than usual
- Change in appetite /eating– eating much more or less than usual – losing or gaining more than 10 pounds
- Problems concentrating or making decisions
- Change in sleep patterns - Insomnia (difficulty sleeping) or sleeping more than usual
- Loss of interest in activities that s/he once enjoyed
- Stating that s/he is depressed, or feels hopeless, or worthless, sad, or confused
- Making statements about or having thoughts of death or suicide

Signs of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)

- Anxiety or increased arousal (difficulty sleeping or concentrating, jumpiness, fear)
- Avoidance of things (places, thoughts, feelings) that remind her/him of the assault.
- Feeling like s/he is reliving the assault – Disturbing and repeated memories, images, flashbacks, or nightmares related to the assault
- Feeling emotionally numb, as if s/he were in a dream or a daze, or feeling that the world is unreal
- Difficulty remembering the assault (*Note: in the case of drug-facilitated assault, s/he is likely to not remember due to intoxication)

Symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder become apparent rather quickly after a traumatic event such as rape. If symptoms go on for more than a month, the survivor may have what is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Symptoms associated with PTSD are primarily the same as those associated with ASD, however they either last longer than the one month following the assault, or they appear later on months after the assault. Your loved one may have had few or no symptoms immediately after the assault, but several weeks or months later, may begin to have flashbacks, distressing memories, disturbed sleep, and/or any of the other symptoms mentioned above. This may indicate that s/he has PTSD.

As the support person to the survivor, you can offer your support in listening to her/him. You can also let her/him know that there is help out there, and encourage her/him to seek professional help if these psychological symptoms are too distressing or overwhelming to handle on her/his own. Let them know that s/he is not alone and that s/he doesn't have to get through this on her/his own.

Ongoing effects on YOU, the family and loved ones:

- **Frustration** – You may find yourself wondering, “When will this be over? When will s/he get better? When will things be normal again?” Know that recovery from a sexual assault is a process that takes time, sometimes more time than we would like. Try to be patient and present in whatever ways you can to help your loved one to heal.

but rather is incorporated as a terrible experience that happened at one point in that person's life. In this stage, the survivor and her/his loved ones **explore opportunities to bring honor and integrity back**, to replace the shame and self-blame that a survivor often feels. A survivor can break the shame and isolation of rape by **reaching out to others**, by sharing her/his story with other survivors in a support group, or by participating in an educational program for rape and sexual assault prevention, for example. Judith Herman talks about a **“survivor mission”**, that is a way for survivors to give something to the community that allows her/him to attach her/his own purposeful meaning to the traumatic experience. During this stage some survivors may **choose to fight back** through legal actions or by learning self-defense as a way of claiming her/his power in the face of a past or potential assailant.

Stage Two - Mourning and Remembrance

- Telling the story
- Grieving the loss
- Looking for meaning in the experience

In this stage of recovery, a survivor works through the task of **telling her/his story** of what life was like before, during, and after the assault. S/he **grieves the losses** connected to the rape, including the possible losses of a sense of safety, of self, of trust in others, and of relationships to name a few. As the survivor moves beyond the initial crisis reactions and begins to **mourn and accept these losses**, s/he also **struggles to find meaning** in the traumatic experience. Some survivors, for example, find that the experience of a sexual assault has brought her/him closer to her/his loved ones. Some look at it as a warning sign to take more personal safety precautions, to stop using substances, or to re-evaluate harmful relationships in her/his life.

Stage Three - Integration and Reconnection

- Bringing back honor and integrity
- Reaching out to others
- Community action / spreading the word
- Fighting back - self defense / legal action

This stage of recovery involves the survivor moving through the trauma and finding a space for it where, as one survivor put it, "it's not so alive [in me]." As the survivor **integrates the assault** into the span of her/his lifetime, it may stop being the focal point of that person's experience. **Rape does not define whom the survivor is,**

- **Anger** - You may find yourself feeling angry at the person that assaulted your loved one, angry at the legal system for not producing results, angry at yourself for being frustrated or impatient with the survivor, angry at being powerless, or angry that you can't change what happened to her/him. Notice if this anger, while a natural reaction to a trauma, begins to distract you from being the best support you can be to your loved one.

- **Vicarious trauma** - Some loved ones of survivors actually start to experience some of the symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). If you have an especially close relationship with the survivor, you live with her/him, or you've heard a lot of details of the assault, you may actually start to picture images of the rape or the perpetrator, for example. Or you may start to feel unsafe in the streets. Be aware of these signs of vicarious trauma. You may want to talk to a counselor or therapist about getting help with these feelings.

- **Acting extremely protective** - It is certainly understandable to feel protective of the survivor after something as terrible as a sexual violation. You fear for her/his safety and want to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again. You may find yourself wanting to always know where your loved one is, with whom s/he's spending time, or making sure s/he is never alone. As hard as it may be, it's important to allow her/him to have time alone if s/he needs it, and to have the freedom to make her/his own choices.

How Sexual Assault May Affect Relationships

Your relationship with the survivor will likely be impacted in some way by the assault. Depending on the nature of

your relationship, the dynamics that existed in your relationship before the assault, and the nature of the assault itself, you may see or experience some of the following relationship difficulties with the survivor:

- **S/he has difficulty in trusting others** – Especially those who may remind her/him of the perpetrator. It may be intensely distressing for her/him to be around all or some men that may look, act, even smell a certain way that reminds her/him of the rapist, for example.
- **S/he withdraws from you and/or others** – It is not uncommon for survivors to withdraw from your relationship due to depression, anxiety, shame, guilt, or feeling unworthy or too distressed to be around you.
- **S/he is wary of new relationships** – This also has to do with the violation of trust that occurred during the assault or violent relationship, and with fears of being hurt again by someone else.
- **S/he is indiscriminant about new relationships** – This may be due to not having the confidence to choose to not be with someone that doesn't feel right, not being able to set boundaries that have been violated already, or not being able to see the warning signs or "red flags" of potentially violent behavior, such as jealousy, possessiveness, controlling the survivor's activities, uncontrolled anger, etc.
- **S/he has problems with developing physical / emotional intimacy** – Violence is the opposite of intimacy. Intimacy involves caring, and feeling comfortable and safe with a person. It can be very difficult for the survivor to get to a place in which

VI. Stages of Recovery – One Day at a Time

According to Judith Herman, a well-known psychiatrist in trauma work, recovery from trauma can be grouped into three stages. These stages are not on a timeline, but rather they build on one another as the individual, her/his loved ones, and community address the impacts that trauma has had on the survivor and those around her/him.

Stage One – Safety

- Safety of environment – Safety planning
- Accurate information
- Restoring sense of control
- Identifying supports
- Using healthy coping skills

This stage of recovery focuses on the tasks of gaining **physical and emotional stability** to help a survivor feel less of a presence of danger from further violence, and **to regain some control over her/his life**. During this stage, it is important that the survivor and loved ones receive **accurate information** about sexual assault and rape and its potential effects. It is critical that this beginning stage address a survivor's **environment and its potential dangers**, as well as **identifying sources of support** like you, the family, friends, and loved ones so that s/he may feel less alone in the huge task of healing from rape and sexual trauma. Part of feeling a sense of safety and control is in helping the survivor **practice healthy coping skills**. (See previous chapter for examples of healthy coping skills)

and her/his life. Many family members, friends, and partners, in an effort to be protective and helpful, start making all of the decisions for the survivor. Some of those decisions could be to move, change jobs, take legal action, never go out at night, or always be accompanied by someone to name a few. While during the crisis period following an assault, help with decision making can be useful and desired by the survivor, as time goes on it is crucial that you, the loved ones, take a step back and allow the survivor to regain some of that control that s/he had taken away during the assault. This helps her/him build confidence in her/his own abilities and can help restore a feeling of balance in her/himself and in your relationship with her/him.

► Let the survivor know that regardless of what happened to her/him, your love and support for her/him is unwavering.

s/he feels all of these things enough to be intimate again.

- **S/he experiences sexual problems** – This is especially difficult for spouses and partners to accept and have patience with. Sex may be disrupted for a long time following an assault. It is important to have open communication on both sides around how this disruption is affecting both of you. Sensitivity and patience are of utmost importance when rebuilding physical intimacy with your loved one.
- **S/he feels especially connected to family, friends, loved ones** – It may happen that this traumatic event has brought out especially strong feelings of love, concern, and connection between survivors and their family and loved ones, perhaps even more so than before the assault.

Your loved one's view of her/himself

The experience of being raped or assaulted devastates a person's belief in her/himself and in her/his ability to keep safe, make decisions, trust her/his instincts, have control of her/his life, and her/his overall capabilities. The psychological effects of rape and sexual assault often prevent survivors from feeling like a whole person. Survivors must embark on the painful journey of losing one's prior self-concept and of rebuilding and rediscovering her/his new sense of self. Many survivors experience some of the following feelings about her/himself:

- Feeling psychologically wounded
- Feeling crazy, like things don't make sense

- Feeling worthless, hopeless, helpless
- Having a shattered self esteem / self concept
- Feeling inadequate, unlovable, like a bad person

As you support your loved one through her/his recovery from sexual assault, keep in mind that you cannot change her/his concept or view of self. You can however, assure her/him that these feelings can be expected following this traumatic event and that there IS a process by which recovery takes place, like a wound that will heal.

Your loved one's view of the world

When we take the time to think about how we would feel after being raped or assaulted, it is not hard to understand how survivors' views of the world could change. The streets become scary, and their homes, workplaces, and other places they spend time could prove dangerous as well. Survivors learn, if they did not already know first hand, that the world is unsafe.

Spiritually, rape and sexual assault can create crisis as well. It is not uncommon for survivors to feel that God, or other supreme being, has abandoned them at their time of need. This can be one of the most tragic consequences of rape for someone who has relied strongly on their spiritual beliefs to get them through difficult times. Others may take their escape from further injury or death as a sign that God or their supreme being was looking over them and actually gave them another chance to live. They may find that the assault in the end provided something useful in their lives. This tragedy may have triggered a positive change, a "blessing in disguise."

life. Activities like work or school also remind the survivor that s/he is capable of moving on with life.

➤ **Continue to be available to discuss the assault / rape**
Even if you feel like they "should be over it", the survivor is still dealing with the emotional impact of this trauma. There is no timetable for recovery. It is a process that requires patience, active participation, and ongoing support. Be there for her/him even after the others have gone.

➤ **If you see the survivor becoming involved in a potentially dangerous or violent relationship, you may encourage them to talk with a counselor or therapist.**

➤ **Encourage the survivor to reach out for help** - This is especially important if you are seeing some signs of ASD, PTSD, depression, or failing physical health. Avoiding dealing with the psychological effects of rape and sexual assault is a common response of survivors. Even simply giving your loved one information on where to go for help may be just the encouragement s/he needs to do it.

➤ As time goes on, it's okay for families and friends to negotiate with survivors. For example, if you notice that s/he has not shown up at family gatherings since the assault, you may want to say, "How about we go for an hour and see how that feels for you." It is not healthy for her/him to stay stuck in the isolation and helplessness of the "victim" role.

➤ **Allow the survivor to make her/his own choices and decisions** - So much of what is violated in a rape or sexual assault is the victim's sense of control over the situation

control or diminish psychological symptoms after a sexual assault.

- **Connect with others that have been through a sexual assault or rape** – Many survivors find that support groups created especially for those that have been through a similar experience are extremely helpful for allowing them feel “normal” in their reactions and at the same time connected to others.

How YOU can be an ongoing SUPPORT to the survivor:

► **Offer concrete support** – You may offer to stay with her/him at night when s/he feels scared, share a meal, help them run errands, and accompany her/him to appointments. These things might seem small, but they mean a lot to someone who has just been through a trauma. Be nurturing, not controlling. Above all, ask her/him directly what s/he may need.

► **Safety planning** – Help your loved one to assess her/his safety and possible risks. Help her/him to think of ways to increase safety in the home and on the street. A very empowering way to increase one’s control of her/his own safety is to take a self-defense class.

► **Encourage her/him to engage in regular and healthy daily activities, such as work, school, recreation, exercise as soon as s/he possibly can** – Of course, the survivor will probably need some “down time” as well as some time alone to sort things out after an assault. Helping her/him to get back to a normal routine soon however, may increase her/his feelings of safety and control over her/his

Harmful VS. Healthy Coping for Survivors

The first stage of recovery from a sexual assault involves the establishment of safety, both in the physical and emotional sense. A survivor will use what are called coping skills to keep her/himself safe and begin to deal with the effects of the trauma as s/he begins the process of healing. Coping skills are things we all do to help move us through difficult times. Some ways of coping, while they may temporarily relieve suffering or make one forget the trauma, may be in the long run harmful to us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They often actually make problems worse.

Some potentially **HARMFUL** coping behaviors are:

- **Increased drug/ alcohol use** – Survivors may use, or increase their use of, substances in an attempt to get rid of flashbacks or distressing memories, make her/him feel happy, increase confidence or sociability, or get rid of insomnia. Sometimes, it works. These “positive” effects are only on the surface and temporary, however. Drug and alcohol use can cause dependence or addiction, harm relationships, and distort one’s judgment and/or mental state. It may also bring on more distressing memories of the assault, or numb the survivor’s pain, both of which can prevent her/him from working through her/his feelings about the assault. This can drastically slow a healthy recovery.

- **Continuous Avoidance** – Avoidance is a normal way in which our minds protect us from traumatic memories. It is a very common way of coping initially with a sexual assault. The survivor may avoid talking about what happened, they may avoid certain places, people, or

things that remind them of the assault or the perpetrator, or s/he may avoid the subject by keeping so busy that s/he “doesn’t have time” to get help or deal with it. This too can be harmful when this avoidance prevents the survivor from doing the hard work that is necessary in working through the psychological effects of sexual assault and rape. Avoidance can also delay the healing process.

- **Social Isolation** – Another common way of coping with the fear, distrust, irritability, or other intense emotions that the survivor may feel is by isolating from others, staying home, being alone, and generally avoiding social situations and/or relationships. This isolation can result in the loss of friendships, intimacy, and social support, all of which are essential to a healthy recovery.

- **Anger directed at others or self** - Sometimes anger is an easier emotion to show than other painful emotions such as hurt, sadness, shame, guilt, or fear. You may find your loved one having a quick temper or getting intensely angry with you or others for what seems to be little reason. Or, you may find her/him being angry with her/himself and acting out in harmful ways such as physically harming her/himself.

***Note:** If you notice that your loved one is engaging in any of these harmful coping behaviors, **don’t ignore it.** You can talk with her/him about the negative impact these behaviors can have as time goes on. It is important, however for you to understand and to validate them as attempts at coping with the sexual assault. Don’t punish her/him and don’t give up on her/him. Instead, brainstorm ideas with her/him of more positive ways of coping with the trauma.

Here are some ideas for **HEALTHY** coping behaviors for the survivor:

- **Learn about sexual assault and its effects on survivors** – Do some research on the internet, read a book for survivors, watch an educational video on the topic of sexual assault and rape. Knowing more about what is happening to her/him can take some of the fear and power out of the traumatic nature of the experience. (See resources at the end of this guide for additional educational websites and materials)

- **Talk to someone for emotional support** – This person that s/he seeks may be you or another loved one with whom s/he feels comfortable talking to. It may also be a rape crisis or mental health counselor. It may be her/his doctor. The important thing is that s/he has an outlet to discuss her/his thoughts and feelings about what has happened. This helps break the isolation that many survivors feel after the assault.

- **Practice relaxation methods** – Breathing and relaxation exercises, meditation and yoga are all ways in which a person may actively relax her/his mind and body. Relaxation techniques can help calm anxiety, lift a person’s mood, and help her/him sleep better.

- **Engage in positive activities to distract from the trauma** – Exercising, going to the movies, talking a walk, going back to work or school, dancing, creating an art project, or anything that may help distract the survivor from constant thoughts of the assault.

- **Talk to a doctor about medication to help with symptoms of anxiety, depression, ASD, PTSD** – A survivor’s primary care physician or a psychiatrist can make an assessment of the need for medication to help