



Workshop: Supporting & Defending Survivors (from Victim Blaming)

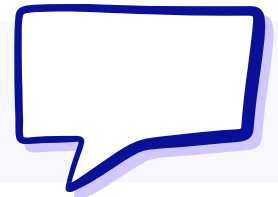
I SAMPLE LEARNING OBJECTIVES



LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- ▶ List supportive ways of responding to someone disclosing experiences of gender-based violence.
- ▶ Explain the barriers for sharing and reporting experiences of gender-based violence specific to men.
- ▶ Give examples of how men can support survivors on individual and community levels.

II SAMPLE INTRODUCTION



“It is hard to talk about the hardest things that have ever happened to us. Today, we’re going to discuss what it looks like to feel connected and cared for around one of these hard topics: sexual assault and dating violence. Based on national statistics, it’s likely that each one of us in this room knows someone who has been through this—survivors—whether they be friends, family, or ourselves. We don’t need to be experts to help people feel safe, lend an empathetic and nonjudgmental ear, and how to speak up when we see something happening that’s not okay.”

**III SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How do you want people to respond when you tell them about something hard you experienced? Do you have any examples of how someone responded well or badly?
- Do you feel that being a man can make it hard to provide care and support for someone? Why?
- Do you feel like you'd know what to say if a friend, partner, peer came to you to tell you about an assault they experienced?
- What do you think are the most common experiences of those who report that they were sexually assaulted? How do you think victim blaming contributes to violence on campus? What are some examples you've heard before?
- What can men do to create a culture where people aren't afraid to share experiences of sexual assault or violence?
- Do you think it is hard for men to talk about having been sexually assaulted or bullied? Are there certain perceptions of male survivors?



IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS



- ▶ Consider how you've felt when you've told others about the most hurtful things that have happened to you or if you have never shared these types of experiences with others, why not?
- ▶ Unfortunately, survivors are often not believed or are re-traumatized when they disclose.
- ▶ 40% of the time, a survivor will disclose to a friend or peer before they report to anyone else. It can be challenging to know what to say, but what we say doesn't have to be perfect. Consider:
 - Letting them know that you believe them and that what happened to them was not their fault.
 - Ensuring that they are safe and not in immediate danger. Always respect the survivor's confidentiality. Don't tell others about their experience without permission.
 - Support their choices. It's important to help them regain their sense of control, even if we may not agree with their decisions. This is also known as using a 'survivor-centric' approach.
 - If they want to talk about the assault, be an open and nonjudgmental listener. If they don't want to talk about it, still let them know that you care and are open to listening if they do want to talk about it.
 - Ask them if they'd like to learn about resources that are available to them.

**IV SAMPLE TALKING POINTS (CONT.)**

- ▶ There is a stigma against men showing “weakness” or vulnerability as men are supposed to always be in control, be strong, and be protectors. Normalizing men asking for and providing support is key.
- ▶ Because of what is socially expected of men, men often don’t learn or practice the active listening and caring gestures that are important to ensure survivors of violence feel supported.
- ▶ Supporting survivors includes more than how we respond when someone discloses to us, though, because whether we’re at work, with friends, or family, there are always people around who have experienced or witnessed violence.
- ▶ Supporting survivors also means:
 - Preventing violence in the first place; Interrupting sexist, degrading or victim blaming language; Speaking with friends about topics like consent and gender expectations; and Being a public advocate and role model for gender equity.
- ▶ No matter what, sexual assault is never the victim’s fault. Placing blame on a victim shifts accountability and fault away from the person committing harm and onto the survivor. This makes it more difficult for a survivor to come forward.
- ▶ Victim blaming can sound like blaming someone’s clothing, whether someone was drinking, or saying that because two people were friends, something couldn’t be assault.


V SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

**TRUE OR FALSE:
MYTHS ABOUT RAPE**

Display a few statements, one at a time. Ask participants to raise their hands if they think each statement is true or false. Use each statement to spark discussion about people's perspectives, experiences, and feelings about the frequency and myths about sexual violence.

Sample Statements from [The Representation Project report](#):

- Most people who are raped report to law enforcement.
- False accusations of rape are common.
- Most rape is committed by strangers.

**SCENARIOS ROLE PLAY:
SUPPORTING A FRIEND**

Provide a scenario to your group about a friend approaching you about a recent uncomfortable experience. Ask participants to identify a partner and discuss strategies for how they would respond in a supportive way. Then, prompt participants to role play those strategies. As a full group, discuss what was difficult, what was effective, how participants felt, and what lessons they can glean.

Sample Scenario:

- You're hanging out with your friend, David, playing video games. He shares that something funny happened to him the other day after team practice in the locker room. David was sitting next to another teammate, Matt, joking around and pushing each other. Then, Matt put his arm around David, slowly moving his hand under your David towel. David pushed Matt away and said, "What the hell, no dude," and walked away. David laughed about it and said he wouldn't be caught in the locker room with just Matt anymore.



VI WORKSHOP RESOURCE LIBRARY



- **Toolkit:** Working with Male Survivors of Sexual Violence - National Sexual Violence Resource Center
- **Toolkit:** What to Say when Supporting Survivors - NO MORE
- **Resource List:** Survivor Support - It's On Us
- **Video:** James is Dead - Blue Seat Studios
- **Video:** How to Stop Victim Blaming - MTV's "Decoded"