

What are some ways you can help a friend or partner who is the survivor of a sexual assault?

- **Believe in your friend.** Believing someone when the person tells you he or she has been sexually assaulted without question or hesitation is the most important thing you can do for your friend.
- **Be interested and empathetic.** Active listening skills teach us to talk less, and make space in a conversation for your friend to express his or herself comfortably. Try not to pry or press for details. Instead, if you are having difficulty understanding what your friend may be saying, clarify, paraphrase, or relate feelings back to the person.
- **Respect your friend's decision about what he or she wants:** who to tell, whether or not to report to the police, and the time and space it takes to heal.
- **Assure your friend that it is not his or her fault.** Survivors of sexual assault often blame themselves for what has happened. It is important that we help them understand that they are not to blame, no matter what happened.
- **Assure your friend he or she is not alone.** Survivors of sexual assault often feel isolated, scared, and powerless. Be there for a friend; your presence and attention can reassure the survivor that they have support.
- **Empower your friend.** Provide resources for the person to utilize as he or she desires.
- **Challenge myths and stereotypes.** Challenge your friends who minimize sexual assault or don't understand it, and give one another the opportunity to be assertive, respectful, honest, and caring. Keep in mind that sexual assault affects many people, including both women and men and both members of the LGBT and straight communities.
- **Hearing about a sexual assault is an upsetting experience. You may want to talk to a trusted friend or counselor about your own feelings.**