



Sensitive Responses to Disclosures of Past Trauma: What to Say, Actions to Offer, and Easy-to-Access Resources

- I'm sorry you were hurt in that way.
- You aren't alone. Unfortunately, (childhood abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault) is more common than people realize.
- You have been through a lot and survived. You must be very strong.
- What happened was not your fault. You are not to blame for what happened to you.
- It takes a lot of courage to tell your story.
- You deserve help in dealing with something so difficult. I'll give you a resource you may want to call at the end of our conversation.

Additional Suggestions

Use grounding techniques if the person seems to be disconnected from the conversation or in distress.

Mental Grounding

- Describe the environment in detail. Describe objects, sounds, smells, temperature, etc.
- Play a categories game, i.e., types of dogs, cities, TV shows, etc.
- Say a safety statement, 'My name is _____. It is (date) _____. I am sitting in (office) _____. It is (time) _____.'
- Describe an everyday activity in great detail.

Physical Grounding

- Use the body's contact with the furniture or floor to remind you where you are
- Grab the arms of the chair as tightly as you can
- Eat something. Describe the flavor and sensation in detail (e.g., have a mint or chocolates on your desk)
- Stomp your feet or push your body into a chair
- Clap your hands or touch your tongue to the roof of your mouth

Soothing

- Think of "favorites"
- Remember a safe place
- Picture people you care about
- Think of things you are looking forward to in the next week

Resources

- **2-1-1:** A special abbreviated telephone number meant to provide information and referrals to health, human and social service organizations
- **608-251-7273:** Dane County Rape Crisis Center Helpline 24/7 or National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-4673
- **Text "GO" to 741741:** Free, 24/7, confidential trained crisis counselors