

## Key Phrases to Remember

- I am sorry this happened to you.
- It is not your fault.
- You are not responsible.
- I believe you.
- I am here for you.
- You deserve to be safe.
- I'm worried about you.
- You deserve better.
- I'm glad you confided in me.
- Whatever you decide to do is okay.
- You are a strong person.

**For more resources, visit:**

<https://rainn.org/get-help/help-a-loved-one>

<https://rainn.org/get-information/sexual-assault-recovery/respond-to-a-survivor>

## Key Phrases to Avoid

### *Never say:*

- You *have* to...
  - Your loved one has been robbed of his/her dignity and control. One of the important aspects of the healing process is giving control back to the victim and empowering him/her. By telling your loved one that he/she *has* to do something, you are not empowering him/her but exercising your control.
- It could have been worse.
  - Sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking are all extremely traumatic experiences. If you tell someone it could have been worse, you downplay the terrible experience your loved one suffered through and can make them feel guilty for feeling the way they do.
- Don't think about it.
  - Victims of sexual violence can never fully heal. However, they can take steps towards moving forward by getting support. If a victim were to hide their emotions it would have severe psychological effects and force them to carry this burden by themselves.
- I know how you feel.
  - "When it comes to trauma, no two people are exactly alike. There are many factors involved in the wide range of response to threat. These responses depend upon genetic make-up, an individual's history of trauma, even his or her family dynamics. It is vital that we appreciate these differences" (Levine, 2005, p. 7).
  - You can never know exactly how your loved one feels
- I know things will get better.
  - At this point in time, your loved one needs to address what has just happened. By talking about the future you are not allowing them take the time they need to cope with everything they are feeling.
- Why didn't you fight back?
  - This phrase is one that begins to blame the victim for his/her experience. No matter the situation or the circumstances, a victim of sexual violence is never to blame.
- If you had only listened to me...
  - This phrase very much blames the victim, something that will only prolong their hurt and delay their healing process. Your loved one has been broken and adding the burden of guilt will only break them further.