

What To Do If A Friend Is Raped

- Though we tend to think of only females being raped, males are raped, too. Just because this list primarily refers to your friend as "her" doesn't mean the same advice can't apply to males.
- For a person to go to anyone and report a rape is a tremendous ordeal. Often the victim's character and judgment are the first things to be questioned. Don't let this fear become a reality. Be supportive and nonjudgmental. Don't ask why questions such as "Why did you go home with him?" or "Why did you drink so much?"
- Let your friend know it's not her fault.
- Believe your friend. People rarely lie about rape. Whatever the circumstances, no one asks to be raped. Let your friend know he or she is not to blame.
- Encourage your friend to call the police, seek medical treatment, and/or seek services from a rape crisis center. If your friend has questions ask them to call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE so that someone can help them understand the options available.
- Regardless of whether your friend intends to report to the police, a medical evaluation is a necessity. Impress upon her the importance of getting medical help immediately, and assure her she does not have to be alone through this process.
- Make sure your friend knows what resources are available and allow her to choose what to do. This can be helpful in regaining a sense of control.
- Respect confidentiality. Let your friend decide whom she will tell about the rape.
- Don't expect your friend to "get over it." Rape is a traumatic experience from which a person does not recover in a hurry. Recovery is a process, not an event. Allow your friend as much time as she needs.
- Encourage supportive counseling.
- Don't be a vigilante.
- It may be helpful for you to speak with a rape crisis counselor as well. You will be able to voice your own anger and learn ways to support your friend.
- Be patient. Remember, it will take your friend some time to deal with the crime.
- Help to empower your friend or family member. Sexual assault is a crime that takes away an individual's power, it is important not to compound this experience by putting pressure on your friend or family member to do things that he or she is not ready to do yet. Respect whatever choices she makes.

*Information gathered from The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) website at www.rainn.org