

How to Respond to Survivor's of Sexual Harassment?

Listen To Them: Offer support and compassion. Be patient and try to avoid interrupting them or making statements that may be judgmental.

Be Sympathetic: Do NOT worsen the situation by assigning blame on the victim, for instance by saying 'it's your fault' or 'you must've been provoking', 'I know him/her and he/she isn't like that.'

Do NOT become the judge/investigator: As a first responder, your duty/moral responsibility is to listen to the victim and not ask poking/prodding questions. You are in NO authority to judge them. Please remember that your response in these initial stages will go a long way in helping or worsening the trauma felt by a victim.

Share resources: Inform them of the institutional resources/support/mechanism available for help/reporting their incident.

Do NOT ask for details about what happened or why it happened: Let survivors share what they are comfortable sharing. Be patient and let them answer/speak at their pace.

Challenge statements of self-blame: Victims often tend to self-blame, if you see them falling into the loop, discourage them from doing so by saying, 'It is NOT your fault.'

Support Them: Support them morally and verbally. Tell them that you hear them and that you're here if they need an ear. You don't need to agree with their life choices; as a first responder, somebody the victim has chosen to trust, your job is to provide unconditional support and not place blame on any party. Determining guilt is the job of the SHIC and no one else.

Respect the survivor's Privacy: Do not tell others about the survivor's assault, or reveal any names or details, without the survivor's permission. Instead ask them to report the incident to the relevant authority and do NOT self-report without their consent.

Support the survivor's Decision: Allow the survivor to make their own decisions regarding reporting and seeking services. These are very personal decisions, and it is critical for a survivor to regain a sense of control and agency.

