

ACT CRISIS SERVICES

ACT Police

Emergency: 000
Non-emergency: 131 444

Responsible for providing policing services to the ACT. They can also redirect you to the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Team (a specialist team dedicated to investigating sexual assault committed against adults and children in the ACT).

Operating Hours: 24/7

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre

(02) 6247 2525

Provides crisis and ongoing counselling to victim-survivors and their supporters. Provides advocacy during police, hospital and court processes. CRCC has specialist services for men and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Operating Hours: 7am-11pm daily

Domestic Violence Crisis Service

(02) 6280 0900
Online Chat also available

Provides crisis intervention services to anyone who is experiencing, or has experienced, domestic and family violence, including telephone support, attendance to incidents with police, emergency accommodation, safety planning and referrals to support services.

Operating Hours: 24/7

Forensic and Medical Sexual Assault Care

Direct: (02) 5124 2185
Canberra Hospital:
(02) 5124 0000

Provides forensic and medical sexual assault care to people who have experienced sexual assault. Located at Canberra Hospital.

Operating Hours: 24/7

ACT Access Mental Health

1800 629 354
(02) 6205 1065

Central point of entry to access mental health services in the ACT. They provide immediate help if you or someone you care about is experiencing a mental health crisis and have a range of services in both hospital and community settings.

Operating Hours: 24/7



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Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

Assists in immediate phone interpreting to deliver equity and access to the community.

131 450 | Operating Hours: 24/7

NATIONAL CRISIS SERVICES

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

Online Chat also available

National sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Operating Hours: 24/7

Full Stop Australia

1800 385 578

Sexual, Domestic and Family
Violence Helpline:

1800 943 539

Rainbow Helpline:

1800 497 212

Online Chat also available

Supporting people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence through counselling services. They also run some additional helplines:

Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone in Australia whose life has been impacted by sexual, domestic and/or family violence.

Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline

For anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual, domestic and/or family violence.

Operating Hours: 24/7

Lifeline

Call: 13 11 14

Text: 0477 13 11 14

Online Chat also available

Crisis support and suicide prevention service for all Australians experiencing emotional distress.

Operating Hours: 24/7

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

Online Chat also available

Free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling service for young people aged between 5 and 25 in Australia.

Operating Hours: 24/7

Suicide Call Back Service

1300 659 467

Online Chat also available

Provides free and immediate counselling support to people at risk of suicide, concerned about someone at risk, bereaved by suicide and people experiencing emotional or mental health issues.

Operating Hours: 24/7

QLife

1800 184 527

Online Chat also available

Provides anonymous and free LGBTI peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

Operating Hours: 3pm-midnight daily

13YARN

13 92 76

Crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Operating Hours: 24/7



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CONSENT

Remember: The inability to speak does not mean you can't express consent. It is important to explore how consent will be expressed and received, particularly with non-verbal replacements.

An important part of sexual wellbeing is having agency over sexual decisions and in sexual situations, which includes the ability to consent to sex, or to refuse it, or to withdraw consent at any point.

Consent is an agreement between two or more individuals to engage in any form of activity. Sexual consent, then, means actively agreeing to be sexual with someone. Without positive consent, any sexual activity is against the law and can be harmful.

Have you got consent?

Only 'YES' means YES! Silence or lack of resistance does not equal consent. Children and some individuals with intellectual disability cannot consent. Consent is needed for any kind of sexual activity, from sharing sexually explicit images or texts, to touching, to kissing, to intercourse. Consent needs to be clearly communicated and is reversible at any time.

Affirmative consent

- Consent is a conversation. It's everyone's responsibility to ensure that they have affirmative and informed consent.
- Consent should be communicated before any sexual activity begins, but it is important to keep this conversation going the entire time.

TIP: One way to ensure that you're constantly communicating consent is through dirty talk. Describe what you're going to do. If your partner doesn't seem into it, **stop**.

Note: The conversation about consent doesn't have to end when sex ends! It's always beneficial to discuss what you enjoyed and what can be improved.

Safe words

- Come up with a safe word with your partner/s. This is particularly helpful if you're not a vocal person during sexual activity.
- Ensure affirmative consent has been given and is still able to be communicated throughout.

TIP: Choose a safe word that is recognisable and easy to remember. That way it's easy to know when to stop. It's as easy as saying ... **pineapples!**



Withdrawing consent

You can withdraw consent at any time. It is everyone's right to be able to stop sexual activity whenever they want. If you disengage non-verbally from sex (such as pulling away or not seeming that into it), this is also a sign that consent has been withdrawn.

SAFE SEX

Practising safe sex is essential for physical, mental and sexual wellbeing.

SEXUAL WELLBEING

Sexual wellbeing is more than just an absence of harm, but rather a positive and respectful view of sexuality, sexual relationships and your body. Sexual wellbeing also includes having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences! Having open and respectful conversations with yourself and with others about all things sex is an important way to promote sexual wellbeing.

COMMUNICATION AND CONSENT

Effective communication and listening is key to safe sex. This includes enthusiastic and ongoing consent from all partners. Asking questions such as, "Do you like this?" and "How does this make you feel?" are helpful starters.

PARTNERS

Safe sex is between consenting partners of legal age (16 years of age in the ACT). Safe sex may be between any number of people, of any sexuality or gender identity, providing it is consensual.

CONTRACEPTIVES

To protect against sexually transmitted infections, the use of condoms and dental dams are most effective. For pregnancy, there are many options of birth control, such as the Pill, Contraceptive Implant or Hormonal IUD.

MIND-ALTERING SUBSTANCES

A person may not have the capacity to consent when under the influence of mind-altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.

HEALTH

If you are sexually active, it is recommended that you get sexual health checkups at least every six months, or after every new partner. There are many services that do this for free, such as the Canberra Sexual Health Centre.

PEASURURE

Sexual wellbeing is more than just an absence of harm, but rather a positive and respectful view of sexuality, sexual relationships and your body. Sexual wellbeing also includes having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences! Having open and respectful conversations with yourself and with others about all things sex is an important way to promote sexual wellbeing.



Orgasms:

While enjoyable, orgasms are not the ultimate goal of sex. Having an enjoyable and pleasurable experience is!

Talking about pleasure doesn't have to be taboo!

Knowing, exploring and pleasuring yourself and others you sexually and consensually engage with is your choice (and can be very fun!)

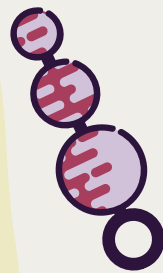
Pleasurable and safe sex practices are proven to:

1. Decrease anxiety and improve sleep
2. Enhance memory and brain power
3. Provide the same health benefits as exercise.



Pleasure With A Partner:

Check in consistently and continuously - ask them if they like what you are doing or if there is something they want you to do. Always check for consent and ensure it's a pleasurable time for all!



Handy Hints:

- Explore your body to see what makes you feel good
- Only do what you are comfortable with
- Something that feels good for one person may not be pleasurable for another
- If it interests you, enhance your sex using sex toys
- Ensure you are relaxed
- Practise safe sex and never forget the lube!

Communicate:

Communication and enthusiastic consent is key!



Self-Care

Do an activity that helps you survive, grow and thrive. Here are a few suggestions:

Rest

Sleep in, have a nap or go to bed early.

Move

Move your body in a way that makes you feel your best. This could be going on a run, stretching, dancing or gardening.

Express Yourself

Do something creative to express yourself. It could be through music, painting, writing, designing or creating something new.

Focus On Your Mental Health

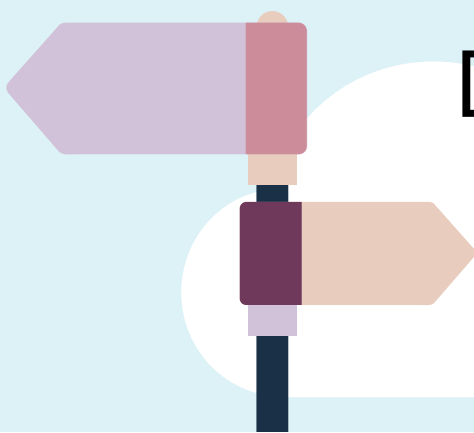
Try affirmations, journaling, breathing exercises, a social media detox or meditation.

Eat What You Love

Eat whatever makes you feel good.

Do Something You Love

Spend time doing something you love to do or something that makes you happy.



RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

LISTEN

It takes enormous courage to disclose an experience of sexual violence, so it's important to be attentive and listen. Allow the victim-survivor to take their time.

"Are you okay? I'm here for you. Take your time."



BELIEVE

Sexual violence is never the fault of the victim-survivor. Make it clear that you believe them and that their feelings are valid. It's important that the victim-survivor doesn't feel judged while speaking with you.

"Thank you for telling me. I believe you."



OFFER SUPPORT

Ask the victim-survivor whether they would like further support. If they decline, that's not your fault. Respect their choice but feel free to remind them that support is always available if they change their mind.

"What would you like to do? What kind of support do you need?"



DEBRIEF

Receiving disclosures of traumatic experiences, including sexual violence, can be distressing. It's important to ensure you are also okay. Support services are available to talk about how you are feeling. This can help mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma.

Always keep the identity of the victim-survivor confidential.



ACKNOWLEDGE

Having someone acknowledge what happened can help validate a victim-survivor's experience and their feelings. Acknowledge their courage and strength for disclosing.

"I recognise this may be difficult to talk about, but thank you for speaking out. What has happened to you is not your fault."



ESTABLISH SAFETY

Ask the victim-survivor if they feel safe. They may still be at risk of immediate and/or future harm and it is important to ask if they have any concerns.

"Do you feel safe right now? Are you safe where you live/work/travel?"



REFER

Although someone has disclosed to you, you are not expected to be their main source of support. To maintain a safe personal boundary, mitigate vicarious trauma and empower the victim-survivor to make an informed choice as best you can, it's important to refer them to the appropriate services with their consent.

"Have you considered speaking to a professional about this? Here are some support services that can help victim-survivors."



NOTE:

All adults have a responsibility to report if they suspect a child or young person may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Mandatory reporting is a legal requirement in some professions. Anyone over the age of 18 is legally required to report suspected child sexual abuse.

Supporting & Checking In

1 Listen

Always listen to and believe the victim-survivor. Remain calm and quiet, allowing them to steer the conversation. Listen to how they are feeling and how they want to be supported. Always keep their information and story confidential.

2 Establish safety

Safety is an immediate and ongoing concern. Check whether the victim-survivor feels free from the threat of harm and whether they may need medical attention. Ensure that you always respect their physical boundaries, such as no longer wanting hugs or other physical contact.

3 Be encouraging

Encourage and support the victim-survivor in the choices they make. This may be in their personal life, or in response to a specific experience. However, always respect their boundaries and do not push them or lead them to make any decisions.

4 Be inclusive

Try not to treat the victim-survivor differently in the context of events and plans. Continue to invite them to different activities, as this encourages the feeling of normality, but don't be discouraged if they decline.

5 Be understanding

In order to support the victim-survivor, you have to understand that it is a difficult journey. Try not to get frustrated at them if you notice changes in behaviour - these may be due to the long-lasting effects of trauma.

6 Be patient

The effects of sexual violence are never truly over. The healing process takes time, and everyone responds differently to these experiences.

7 Empower and provide ongoing support

Empower the victim-survivor to make the choices best suited to them. When and if you are able to, check in and offer support. Being consistent and genuine is recommended.

8 Take care of yourself

It is not selfish to make sure your mental and physical capacities are not drained. Vicarious trauma is real and you cannot effectively help others if you are not safe and supported.

A PERSON WITH A HISTORY OF TRAUMA, SUCH AS SEXUAL VIOLENCE, MAY BE DISTRESSED OR RE-TRAUMATISED BY TOUCH, CERTAIN WORDS, IMAGES OR SCENTS.*

TRIGGERS

The stimuli mentioned above are commonly known as 'triggers', which can bring up memories or feelings associated with a traumatic event. Triggers vary from person to person, meaning different people may be triggered by different things.

RE-TRAUMATISATION

When someone is triggered, they may be re-traumatised and feel like they are re-experiencing that traumatic event. Re-traumatisation can happen to anyone who has experienced a traumatic event, and can impact an individual in many ways.

CONTENT WARNINGS

When discussing content related to sexual violence or other potentially triggering topics, content warnings are recommended. They notify the audience of material that may be distressing or cause re-traumatisation, so that the reader has choice and autonomy over what content they consume.

Vicarious Trauma & Burnout

Helping victim-survivors is rewarding and immensely important. However, it is important to acknowledge the effects it has on you as an individual.

Vicarious trauma

Experiencing symptoms of trauma as a result of exposure to other people's trauma.

Burnout

Exhaustion as a result of long periods of physically and/or psychologically taxing work without breaks.

Recognising the signs of vicarious trauma

- Intrusive thoughts of a victim-survivor's experience or story
- Intensified fear and anxiety
- Disruption of sleep and recurring nightmares
- Racing thoughts
- Loss of connection with identity, self and others
- Lack of ability to appropriately manage personal boundaries
- Loss of pleasure in daily activities and personal interests
- Withdrawal from others
- Physical and emotional distress.

Recognising the signs of burnout

- Struggling to manage personal boundaries
- Constant dissatisfaction
- Difficulty leaving work at the end of the day or never leaving on time
- Feeling constantly under pressure, powerless and overwhelmed
- Feeling frustrated or constantly judged by others
- Being unable to properly refuel and rest
- Loss of connection with yourself and your own identity
- Irritability and anger.

These lists are not exhaustive and vicarious trauma and burnout can impact everyone differently.

There are a few ways to prevent or mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma and burnout. Taking care of yourself mentally and physically is extremely important, which can be done through self-care, rest and reaching out to your support networks. If you are affected by symptoms of vicarious trauma or burnout within your workplace, let your team or managers know how you are feeling. There may be employee assistance programs available to you that can help create a safer and more supportive workplace environment.



LANGUAGE WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Language surrounding sexual violence must be respectful and supportive. The STOP Campaign values the promotion of language that is trauma-informed and intersectional to foster a safe and inclusive environment for all.

Trauma-informed language does not attempt to 'fix', place blame or question someone's experience.

Intersectional language is responsive to different dimensions of someone's identity, and acknowledges that one label is not sufficient to account for an individual experience.

Everyone experiences and responds to sexual violence differently. What constitutes safe and inclusive language can differ from person to person and within cultures.

1 How to use trauma-informed and intersectional language:

- Respect the anonymity, confidentiality and boundaries of others and their experiences.
- Use appropriate gender pronouns and don't make assumptions. It's always better to ask than assume.
- Have meaningful, safe conversations about sexual violence, trauma and mental health.
- Understand that particular body language cues are not universal and respect each individual's bodily autonomy.
- Discourage rape jokes and slut-shaming when safe to do so.

2 Consequences of unsafe language:

- Contributing to negative stereotypes that normalise rape culture.
- Reinforcing damaging stigmas.
- Re-traumatising victim-survivors.
- Triggering vicarious trauma in others.
- Causing direct harm by discouraging victim-survivors from sharing their stories and asking for help.
- Placing blame on victim-survivors for their experiences.

Family Violence

Family violence refers to violence between family members, including between current or former intimate or domestic partners, extended family and kinship relationships. This includes elder abuse, violence between children, parents, guardians or siblings, and violence perpetrated by a carer or in-law.



Family violence includes violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member and causes that family member to be fearful for their safety or wellbeing.

The **Family Violence Act 2016 (ACT) s8** defines family violence as:

- Physical violence or abuse
- Sexual violence or abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Economic abuse
- Threatening behaviour, or
- Coercion or any other behaviour that is controlling or dominating

Physical violence: can include slaps, hits, punches, being pushed, choking, burns and the use of weapons.

Sexual violence: can include rape, sexual abuse, unwanted sexual advances or harassment and intimidation, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, sexual coercion, having sex out of fear of what a partner might do, forced prostitution and human trafficking.

Emotional or psychological abuse: can include intimidation, belittling, humiliation, and the effects of financial, social and other non-physical forms of abuse.

Coercive control: can include isolating victim-survivors from family and friends, controlling access to finances, monitoring their movements and restricting access to information and assistance.

Family violence also includes behaviour where children hear, witness or are otherwise exposed to such behaviour and its effects, such as:

- Overhearing threats being made in another room of the house
- Witnessing an assault or seeing injuries on a family member that has been assaulted
- Witnessing people comfort a family member who has been abused.



Intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence, also referred to as '**domestic violence**', refers to a pattern of behaviour by a current or former intimate partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours.

If you are experiencing family violence and fear for your safety or that of another family member, you can contact the police, a local Legal Aid centre, domestic violence helpline or a person you trust. In an emergency, call 000.