

**IF YOUR DAUGHTER
HAS BEEN
RAPED OR
SEXUALLY
ASSAULTED**

The background features a light teal upper section and a light beige lower section, separated by a curved line. Several other curved lines in various shades of teal and beige sweep across the bottom of the page, creating a layered, abstract effect.

if YOUR daughter has been raped or sexually assaulted

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If your daughter has been raped or sexually assaulted it can be difficult to know how to react and how to support her. Even though it may feel daunting it is possible for you to be a good source of support for your daughter.

Rape and sexual assault will have an emotional impact on your daughter but it is also likely to impact upon you. As a parent you may experience a range of emotions such as shock, anger, horror at what your daughter has experienced and a general sense of helplessness. You may also feel angry with her if you feel that she has acted irresponsibly. You might also feel guilty about what happened and blame yourself for not being able to protect her. In the weeks after the assault you may feel frustrated that your daughter is not reacting in the way you would expect her to or would consider 'normal' following a sexual assault.

All of these emotions and thoughts can feel overwhelming and difficult to manage while still supporting your daughter. The rest of this leaflet contains information and suggestions that could help you to understand her needs and provide effective support.

Protecting your daughter

It is understandable that you may want to try and take more control over your daughter's life following a sexual assault. You may stop her from seeing certain friends, not allow her to go out unless it is with you or take away her phone and internet access. You may be doing this because you want to protect her and also to set boundaries for her.

However, your daughter may perceive these actions as a form of punishment which can lead to feelings of self-blame. These 'rules' could also isolate your daughter which could affect how she deals with the sexual assault. Allowing your daughter to resume her normal routine could help her regain some control over her life. It may help to lessen feelings of loss and helplessness and give her some structure during what can often be a chaotic time. It is important for your daughter to have the support of friends which will help to foster a sense of normality. It may be a good idea to sit down with her and discuss the concerns you have about her safety and perhaps work together to agree a plan that covers when she can go out, what time she has to be back and where she can and cannot go.

Understanding trauma

Responses to traumatic events vary from person to person. There is no 'right' way to react to traumatic experiences. Your daughter may experience symptoms usually associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). These symptoms include:

- Sleeping problems
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Frightening thoughts
- Outbursts of anger
- Anxiety
- Alcohol/Drug abuse
- Refusal to discuss the experience
- Lack of interest in life
- Numbness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling depressed

These responses to trauma are normal and in most cases their severity decreases over time. However, if your daughter's symptoms persist or you are worried about your daughter's ability to cope then you can discuss it with a professional such as your GP, a Social Worker or a school nurse. Remember it will take time for your daughter to feel better but if she is struggling to cope with the assault then it may be helpful for her to speak to a counsellor or a clinical psychologist.

While your daughter's reactions can leave you feeling confused and concerned, it is important to remember that she is trying to make sense of events that have perhaps changed the way she sees herself and her world. Allow your daughter to have space but also let her know that you are there to support her in whatever way she needs you to.

if your daughter does not want to talk to you

When your daughter has been harmed, it is natural for you to want to know what she has been through and you may feel that she should be talking to you about it. However, it can be very difficult for survivors of rape and sexual assault to talk about their experience. Your daughter may feel ashamed about what has happened to her and worried about your reaction to the things she tells you. She may also be worried that you will not be able to cope with what she has told you.

It is not unusual for young people to feel uncomfortable at the idea of talking to their parents about personal feelings and of matters relating to their sexual health. If you are concerned about your daughter then you may want to think about other professionals that she could talk to. Although there are benefits to talking about traumatic experiences, your daughter should not be pressurised to do this. It is a good idea to make her aware of all the services available that can support her.

blame

It is not uncommon for young people to blame themselves for being raped or assaulted. However, it is important that this view is not reinforced by you. You may have concerns about the way your daughter has behaved and you might feel that her behaviour is one of the reasons why she was assaulted. This is not a helpful or supportive position to take as the only person to blame is the assailant who chose to assault your daughter. However, a conversation concerning personal safety and personal boundaries can also be positive if it is approached in a way that encourages self-care in all areas of your daughter's life, not just as a means of preventing an assault.

You may also be experiencing feelings of self-blame and perhaps you are questioning what you could have done to prevent the assault. This is a natural response for you to have but it is very important for you to acknowledge that the responsibility for the assault lies with the assailant.

Help

At the Haven, your daughter will have an opportunity to talk to the Young Person's Worker (YPW) who specifically works with young people aged 13-18. The YPW is there to ensure that your daughter understands what kind of medical care she is receiving and can answer queries regarding sexual health. The YPW is also available to see your daughter for on-going emotional support or, with her consent, she can refer her to a counselling or clinical psychology service.

The YPW is there to act as an advocate for your daughter and will offer her a confidential service. Your daughter may want space and privacy and it is important to respect that. If the YPW has concerns about her emotional and physical safety she will encourage your daughter to discuss these with you. If she consents for us to do so or we feel it is necessary, then these concerns will be discussed with the Hospital's Safeguarding Children and Young People Team.

Your daughter is likely to be seen alone at the Haven, but please do not feel shut out by this. Talking about upsetting and frightening experiences can be much easier when there is not another person present so the YPW will always offer to see your daughter on a one-to-one basis.

supporting your daughter through the criminal justice process

You may not agree with the decisions your daughter makes but it is important that you listen to her views. You may, for example, feel that she should pursue the allegation she has made but she may not wish to do so. Conversely you may feel that going to court will be too stressful and disruptive for her. While it is important for you to discuss the positives and negatives of pursuing the allegation with her it is ultimately your daughter who should make that decision with your support and guidance.

getting support for yourself

It is possible that your daughter's experience has brought back painful memories for you, perhaps related to your own past experiences. Even if this is not the case, it is still important that you look after yourself, so if you are finding it difficult to cope with the assault then you may want to consider accessing counselling or psychological support. You can access these services via your GP or ask a member of staff at the Haven to advise you about the appropriate services available.

Having a strong family network can make a significant difference to how well a young survivor of sexual assault copes with their experience. Your love, patience, concern and understanding will help to provide a base of support that your daughter can draw upon during this difficult time in her life.

support services:

MOSAC

MOSAC: Support, counselling and advocacy for non-abusing parents/carers of children who have been sexually abused.

Helpline: 0800 980 1958 (Freephone)

www.mosac.org.uk

parentline plus

PARENTLINE PLUS: Support, information and advice for parents on different aspects of parenting.

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

NSPCC

NSPCC: 24 hour child protection helpline providing information and advice to anyone worried about a child's physical and emotional safety.

Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Textphone: 0800 056 0566

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

NAPAC

NAPAC:(The National Association for People Abused in Childhood): Support for adult survivors of childhood abuse.

Helpline: 0800 085 3330

www.napac.org.uk

Kidscape

KIDSCAPE: Support for parents whose children are being bullied.

Helpline: 08451 205 204

Email: webinfo@kidscape.org.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk

ace

ACE (Advisory Centre for Education): Independent advice centre offering parents free telephone advice on education, bullying at school, special needs education.

Helpline: 0808 800 5793

www.ace-ed.org.uk

young minds

YOUNG MINDS: Freephone helpline for parents concerned about their child's emotional and mental health.

0800 018 2138 (Parent's Information Service)

0207 336 8445 (General)

Email: enquiries@youngminds.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

bacp

BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy):

This website has details of counsellors and therapists working in London and the UK.

www.bacp.co.uk

gingerbread

GINGERBREAD: Advice and support for lone parents.

Helpline: 0800 018 5026 (Freephone)

www.gingerbread.org.uk

childnet international

CHILDNET INTERNATIONAL: Providing tips and advice on how to use the internet safely.

0207 639 6967

Email: info@childnet.com

www.childnet-int.org

papyrus

PAPYRUS (Parents' Association for the Prevention of Young Suicide): Raising awareness and offering support and information to parents about young people and suicide.

Helpline: 08000 684141

Email: admin@papyrus-uk.org

www.papyrus.org.uk

sexual Assault referral centres

To find the location of your nearest referral centre click on www.homeoffice.gov.uk and then type in 'sexual assault referral centre locations' in the quick search window. For anyone living in London the Havens will be able to offer you help and they can be contacted at:

The Haven (Camberwell)

King's College Hospital
Denmark Hill
London SE5 9RS

020 3299 1599 (9am-5pm Monday to Friday)
020 3299 9000 (all other times)

The Haven (Paddington)

St. Mary's Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY

020 3312 1101 (9am-5pm Monday to Friday)
020 3312 6666 (all other times)

The Haven (Whitechapel)

The Royal London Hospital
Whitechapel
London E1 5BD

020 7247 4787 (at any time)