

COVID-19

Increased Risk

The dangers of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking are possibly worsening amid social distancing measures in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Domestic Violence is a pattern of violent, coercive, or controlling behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship.

Sexual Violence is any unwanted sexual contact or behavior that occurs with coercion, manipulation, or force and without the explicit consent of the other person.

Stalking is a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes fear or concern for safety for self or those close to a survivor.

Support Survivors

Listen with empathy. Listen without judgement or blame. Survivors are more likely to share concerns with those who listen with empathy. Even if you don't know how to respond, listening is an act of kindness.

Validate experiences. Know that sharing is an act of bravery. Validating a survivor's experiences can be powerful. You could say:

- I am sorry this is happening to you.
- This is not your fault.
- I believe you.
- I don't know what to say but I do know where to go for help.
- I am glad you told me.

Understand safety. Don't assume you know what is best for someone. What seems safe to you may not be safe for the survivor. Self-determination on how to best navigate their safety is imperative. Trust the survivor knows their situation and support their choices.

Prevention Through Connection

Survivors cannot achieve safety on their own. Stopping and preventing domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking require a connected community that cares for everyone's safety.

Social support and connection in a community is a known protective factor against these crimes. Connecting with others builds survivor resiliency, increases self-esteem, and reduces isolation.

Your Role

While you are already checking in with friends, family, coworkers, students, and neighbors regarding basic needs and how they are doing, ask about their physical and emotional safety, too.

If asking directly doesn't feel comfortable, ask an unassuming question like "How is everyone holding up in the house?" or "How is your partner or spouse doing?" Asking these questions can create space for honest conversation about concerning behaviors.

Ask everyone.

These insidious crimes thrive in silence and secrecy, so we can't assume to know who is living with violence and who isn't.

Connection is the goal.

Survivors don't have to disclose they are survivors for your efforts to be effective. It's the asking that may help a survivor begin to trust and work toward disclosure.

Resources

Refer survivors to resources. They might not be in a position to ask for more help at the time, but letting them know options when they are ready can be a lifeline.

24/7 in the Bluegrass Region:

Ampersand Sexual Violence Resource Center: 800-656-4673

GreenHouse17: 800-544-2022

