

Effects of Sexual Abuse/Assault

There is no “normal” way to cope with the aftermath of sexual violence, but there are many common short and long-term effects. Keep in mind that **everyone reacts differently**.

Guilt, shame, blame and anger.

Survivors may feel angry and direct that at people they love and trust, but they do not really know why. They may feel guilty about not having been able to stop the abuse, or blame themselves for what happened.

Self-esteem.

Survivors may struggle with low self-esteem, which affects many different areas of life such as relationships, school or career, and their health. The survivor may feel overwhelmed, inadequate or helpless.

Physical and emotional effects.

Survivors may experience headaches, digestive issues, or other pain, develop sleeping difficulties or become anxious or depressed.

Intimacy and relationships.

Survivors may struggle to set boundaries that help them feel safe in relationships. Trusting others may be difficult. Survivors may find challenges with intimacy or communication.

Source: Saskatoon Sexual Assault & Information Centre
www.saskatoonsexualassaultcentre.com



Envision is a non-profit, community-based organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors from Southeast Saskatchewan.

Envision helps individuals, families and couples embrace healthy choices to feel empowered, by providing therapeutic counselling, support, in-home services, groups, workshops and education.

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We do not subscribe to call display. Collect calls accepted.

Envision receives funding from the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Services, United Way of Estevan, United Way Regina and the community.



Donations from private groups, organizations, corporations, or individuals are gratefully accepted to assist Envision in serving communities in Southeast Saskatchewan.



www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com

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Serving Southeast Saskatchewan since 1994

When Someone Close To You Has Been Sexually Assaulted

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How You Can Help



Exploring your options and supporting your decisions

We use the term **“Survivor”**, a word conveying strength and potential for recovery, as many persons who have been assaulted do not wish to be labeled a “victim”.

How can you help?

Immediately After the Assault

Ensure that the survivor is in a safe location, or help them find a safe place to be, in the short term.

Make sure the Survivor knows you believe them. Remind the Survivor that what happened **was not their fault**.

A request of the forensic exam (rape kit) will mean the automatic involvement of the police, and it is the Survivors choice whether or not to get the exam. Medical care will still be given without a forensic kit.

It is the Survivors choice whether or not to involve the police. Voice your support in an offer to accompany her/him to the police station if ever she/he wants to make a report, and respect the Survivors wishes if she/he does not want to do so at this time.

There is no statute of limitations on reporting sexual abuse/assault; **the report can be made at any time in the future**.

Ask the Survivor what their needs are, and help in those specified ways.

Long Term Help

Encourage the Survivors to seek professional help. It is not uncommon for Survivor’s to want to forget what happened and try to move on, but research shows that the sooner she/he can speak about the experience in a supportive environment (with family, friends, and/or a professional counsellor), the faster and more complete the healing process will be. **Our counselling services are free and confidential**.

Validate what she/he sees to be the effects of their experience. It is important not to minimize their experience or feelings to try to get them to feel better. **There is no timeline for recovery— it takes as long as it takes**.

Sometimes talking about it can be overwhelming. There are many ways of being supportive (going for a walk, running errands together, preparing meals, etc.)— find the ones that work for your relationship with the survivor.

Respect the Survivor’s independence and avoid the temptation to be overprotective. Many Survivor’s worry that they will be seen or treated differently because of their experience.

Remind the Survivor that 100% of the blame rests with the offender, no matter what the circumstances are.

Respect the Survivor’s request for privacy.

Self-Care

In the aftermath of sexual assault, family, friends and partners often have responses that are parallel to those of the Survivor: shock, rage, confusion, and feelings of helplessness.

If you need support, Envision is here to help.

Envision Counselling and Support Centre offers support to Survivors of Childhood Abuse, Survivors of Sexual Assault, Survivors of Stalking/Harassment, Abusive Relationships and their parents, partners and loved ones.

Information Services

Call or visit any of the Envision offices to speak to a counsellor or to get more information on any questions you may have.

Therapeutic Counselling and Support

We provide free and confidential counselling without a referral to individuals in Southeast Saskatchewan. We can help with counselling for adults, teens, children, couples, and families.

Groups, Workshops, and Education

We offer educational presentations to agencies, organizations, groups, schools, or businesses. Participants may sign up for workshops and support groups that will improve self-worth by relating to others with similar experiences.

