

How to Support Survivors of Human Trafficking

- **Provide information:** There are several things a survivor may want to think about: seeking support, speaking with law enforcement, accessing social services. It is important to provide information but to allow the survivor the agency to make their own choices. The National Human Trafficking Resource Center has a hotline available at 1-888-373-7888 or via SMS at 23337333 (Text “HELP” or “INFO”)
- **Be respectful of privacy and confidentiality:** It may be hurtful or dangerous to disclose the survivor’s situation to others – including law enforcement. Don’t disclose personal information without the survivor’s knowledge or clear permission.
- **Let the survivor make their own decisions:** You can provide information and options for the survivor, but always let the survivor make their own decisions. Many survivors feel a deep sense of disempowerment as a result of being violated. Therefore it is important to help the survivor feel empowered. Instead of taking charge, ask how you can help. Offer to accompany the survivor to seek medical attention or to law enforcement - if they so choose. Support the decisions the survivor makes, even if you might not agree with them.
- **Remind the survivor that you care:** The survivor may worry that their friends, loved ones and their community won’t think of them in the same way. Let the survivor know you don’t see them differently, and that you are here to support them.
- **Trust the survivor:** Let the survivor know that you believe them and you honor the decisions they make.
- **Be aware of your own reactions:** You will likely feel many emotions such as confusion, hurt or anger in the event you may learn about human trafficking or suspect someone is being trafficked. No matter how helpful you are, you may not be able to change the situation. The best you can do is help the survivor find ways to help themselves. Your respectful support is much more helpful to the survivor than your anger and frustration.
- **Recognize the difference between what you want and what the survivor wants:** Try to distinguish between what you are doing to make yourself feel better from what you are doing to help the survivor. You may be tempted to do things that make you feel better which are not helpful to the survivor, such pushing them to make changes before they are ready. Instead, ask the survivor what would be most helpful.
- **Know your limitations:** Every individual has a limit to how much they can give. This does not make you a failure. It is important to know your own limitations of support and to share these clearly with the survivor. Provide the survivor with other support options; for example, provide them with National Human Trafficking Resource Center number and other local organizations (included in this packet). Let the survivor know you will not feel hurt if they choose to talk with someone else.
- **Seek support for yourself:** Your support plays a critical role in the survivor’s transition to safety. Talking with someone who can help you work through your own feelings will better enable you to support the survivor. Remember to respect the survivor’s privacy when seeking support from others. Project SAFE is available for you to call: 1-866-509-SAFE in addition to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center.
- **Learn as much as you can about human trafficking:** Be as familiar as you can with community resources and patterns of economic exploitation. This will help you better understand the survivor’s experiences and the process of recovery.

Adapted from “Helping a Survivor of Sexual Assault” by Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center at University of Michigan



www.projectsafephilly.org
1.866.509.SAFE