

OVERCOMING
FEARS OF
INTIMACY

Resuming Intimacy May Feel
Difficult....

* Be patient. Sexual disruption is usually temporary and can be overcome with sensitivity and understanding.

* Don't be angry or doubt your adequacy if your partner is less responsive than before.

* Your partner needs to be given the opportunity to regain their sense of personal control. Do not demand or pressure them into sexual activity. Resuming sex is not necessarily a means of normalizing the relationship or helping in the recovery process. Let your partner make sexual decisions.

* You should also not avoid any display of intimacy. It is important that your partner doesn't misinterpret your behavior as a sign that you feel they are "tarnished." There are many ways to express intimacy without sexual activity. For example, asking permission to cuddle or hold hands is appropriate. Again, honest communication and a willingness to take your cues from your partner will help your relationship.

If you or your partner have questions or need to talk with someone, feel free to contact us 24 hours a day.

ATVP
Celebrating 25 Years
of Survivors' Strength in 2005

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24-Hour Hotline
Collect Crisis Calls Accepted

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HELP FOR PARTNERS OF
SEXUAL ASSAULT/ABUSE
SURVIVORS



**Alternatives to Violence
of the Palouse**

Help for victims and
survivors of domestic
violence and
sexual assault

24 hour Crisis Hotline
(208) 883-HELP
Or
(509) 332-HELP

HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR PARTNER

Support Your Partner

It is critical that you believe that the assault has occurred. Let your partner know that you do not blame him/her for the assault.

Reassure Your Partner

Let him/her know you are on their side and that you will endure the crisis with them.

Validate Your Partner's Feelings

He/She may be feeling a variety of emotions after the assault. By acknowledging your partner's feelings, it will help him/her realize that what he/she is feeling is normal and completely acceptable.

Be a Good Listener

If you hear your voice more than theirs, you are talking too much and not listening. Don't feel as if you have to have all the answers.

Be Honest About What You Are Feeling

This will allow your partner to do the same. However, at no time should you judge or accuse him/her regardless of the circumstances.

Provide Support Without Taking Over

Let your partner begin to regain control over his/her life. Wanting to take charge of the situation will not help your partner.

SELF CARE FOR PARTNERS

As the partner of a survivor, you are likely to be the primary source of support. Being supportive does not mean that you are responsible for the recovery of the survivor. You can stand behind them to offer support and validation for the survivor's recovery.

Self Care Tips for Partners

Establish Boundaries

It is very important to separate your needs from your partner's. Realize that your needs are just as important and you have the right to ask that they be met.

Locate Resources

Find other support systems for your partner. Community, family, support groups or professional counselors can help meet your partner's needs.

Take a Break

If you need time off, take it. Spending time away does not mean that you have abandoned your partner; you are doing it to take care of yourself *and* your partner.

Find Support for Yourself

You deserve to have your thoughts and feelings listened to as well. Find a friend, family member, counselor or support group.

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

"I don't want to force you to talk about this when you don't want to. I just want you to know that I'm willing to listen if you decide that you want to talk."

"You don't seem like you want to talk about it and that's fine. I just want you to know that I'm here if you need to later."

"You seem to be having a really tough time with this. If you want to talk about it, I would be glad to listen."

"I want you to know that I don't know what to say, but I'm your friend and I believe you and will support you in whatever decision you make."

"As your partner, I want to make things better and I can't. I love you and will support you through this."

"Tell me how I can help you."

Taken from "A guide book for parents and friends of a sexual assault survivor" (1999)