

When someone you know has experienced rape or a sexual offence



What can you do to support victims of rape and sexual offences?

If a spouse, colleague, relative, friend or someone you know has experienced rape or a sexual offence, you may feel it's easier to stay silent. You might be worried that you're going to say the wrong thing. But there are ways that you can support a survivor, both emotionally and practically.

You can also take action in your local community.

Here are some suggestions and ideas about how you can support.

How to support emotionally



Listen and try to understand

You may not know what it feels like to be the survivor of rape or a sexual offence but you know how helpful it is when someone listens and supports you through difficult times. You can help by learning about abuse and how it affects people. You can read up on what types of questions you should and shouldn't ask and what you can do to support. You should try to avoid questions and comments that sound judgmental, like "why didn't you scream?" or "why did you wait so long to tell anyone?"

Believe what the survivor is telling you

It takes a lot of courage for survivors of rape and sexual offences to talk about their experience. When they open up, you should believe what they are telling you. You shouldn't ask lots of specific questions and you shouldn't tell anyone else what they have shared with you unless they have given you permission to do so.

Don't blame or judge

No matter the circumstances, no one ever deserves to be raped or sexually assaulted.

It is never the survivor's fault if they are raped or sexually assaulted and you shouldn't ask questions that imply that the violence is their fault.

Allow the survivor to express their emotions

Listen supportively. If your friend wants to cry, allow them the space to do so and if they don't, you shouldn't take this as a sign that their experience wasn't real or wasn't traumatic. People respond to rape and sexual offences in very different ways.

The survivor could be dealing with delayed shock or with feelings of denial. If the survivor is depressed or anxious for a long time, you should try to encourage them to see a psychologist, counsellor or social worker.

Give them time

Don't say things like "try to forget what happened." Especially if your friend was raped, they are not going to feel better immediately. Give them time to process what happened. Make sure they know that you are willing to talk, that you care about them and that you want to find out how they are feeling.

Let them take control of their own healing

It's important that survivors of all violence recover a sense of control over their lives.

It won't help for you to tell them what to do. What you can do is listen, support and offer information if they need it.

Get support

You might feel anger, frustration, sadness and pain because someone you care about has been hurt. It's important that you get support for yourself if you need it so that you can deal with these feelings. While you can speak to the survivor about how their experience has made you feel, try not to lean on them too much as they may then feel guilty or bad to share more.

Reach an understanding about sex

If you are the lover, husband or boyfriend of someone who has been raped, it might be difficult to be sexually intimate with them after what they have experienced. Your partner may not want to have sex or might freeze up during sex and you should be aware of how they are responding. Stop if you are unsure. Be patient and try to find ways to show that you love them which aren't sexual. Sometimes a particular touch, smell or sight might make them remember the incident and cause a flashback.

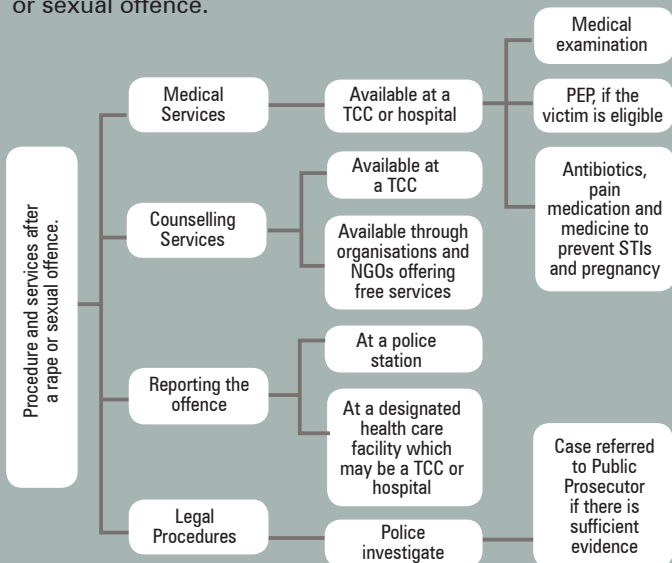
Flashbacks are very scary and can be extremely upsetting. If you aren't sure how they feel, talk about it.

How to support practically



Decide on a course of action together

There are different kinds of professional help available to survivors of rape and sexual offences. You can help your friend decide on what kinds of services they want to access and what kind of action they want to take. If you or the victim are unsure about what action to take or where to go, the best place to start is a Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC). TCCs are facilities which have specially trained staff and access to a variety of services for survivors of rape and sexual offences. Below is a chart of the services and actions available to people who have experienced a rape or sexual offence.



Support them to lay charges if they choose to

In terms of the Sexual Offences Act, rape and sexual assault are crimes. The survivor can lay charges but they have a right to decide for themselves whether they wish to or not. They do not have to report the rape or sexual offence in order to access medical treatment. However, if they do not report the offence, they may have to pay for the cost of treatment themselves.

Help them to take action

South Africa has a framework of laws that criminalise rape and sexual offences and that create systems for reporting, management, investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes.

The South African Constitution, the Sexual Offences Act and the Domestic Violence Act protect the rights of all people to live lives that are free from violence. Together, these and other acts and regulations create the framework for a criminal justice system relating to sexual offences. You can help to make the criminal justice system effective by accompanying survivors to court and to police stations and making sure that they are treated fairly and with dignity, and that they are helped properly and quickly.

Help them to secure safety

If the survivor of a rape or sexual offence is still at risk or feels unsafe, help them to find a place of safety or develop a safety plan with them. You could also urge them to apply for a protection order in terms of the Domestic Violence Act if they were sexually assaulted by someone they share a home with.

In the case of rape

If the survivor was raped, it is critical that they receive post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in order to prevent the transmission of HIV. PEP must be taken as soon as possible but within 72 hours of the rape. The victim may also be given emergency contraceptive medication to prevent pregnancy and medicine to prevent sexually transmitted infections.



How to take action in your community



DEMAND JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

South Africa has a progressive Constitution and strong laws that make rape and sexual assault criminal offences. But for many reasons, perpetrators are sometimes still not held accountable. In some instances, this is because survivors choose not to report the offence and that is their right. But in some instances, it can be because survivors find the criminal justice system difficult to go through. You can help by making sure that everybody who helps your friend after a rape or sexual offence – the police, the doctors, the nurses, court officials and anyone else – treats them with dignity and compassion at all times. To date most men still do not get actively involved in demanding that our Government take decisive action. It is critical that men participate in marches and rallies demanding that women and men all enjoy our constitutional right to safety and security.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Thuthuzela Care Centres

Thuthuzela Care Centres are one-stop facilities where a rape survivor receives medical, psychosocial and legal support. They have been introduced as a critical part of South Africa's antirape strategy, aiming to reduce secondary victimisation, improve conviction rates and reduce the cycle time for finalisation of cases.

PROVINCE	THUTHUZELA CARE CENTRE	CONTACT NO.
EASTERN CAPE	Bizana TCC St Patrick's Hospital, Bizana	039 251 0236
	Butterworth TCC Butterworth Hospital, Butterworth	047 491 2506
	Dora Nginza TCC Dora Nginza Hospital, Port Elizabeth	041 406 4111
	Libode TCC St Barnabas Hospital, Nyandeni Region	047 568 6274
	Grey Hospital TCC Grey Hospital, King William's Town	043 643 3300
	Lusikisiki TCC St Elizabeth Hospital, Lusikisiki	039 253 5000
	Mdantsane TCC Cecilia Makiwane Hospital, East London	043 761 2023
	Mthatha TCC Mthatha General Hospital, Mthatha	047 502 4000
	Taylor Bequest TCC Taylor Bequest Hospital, Matatiele	039 737 3107
FREE STATE	Bongani TCC Health Complex (Old Provincial Hospital) Long Road Street, Welkom	057 355 4106
	Metsimaholo TCC Metsimaholo District Hospital, 8 Langenhoven Street, Sasolburg	016 973 3997
	Phekolong TCC Phekolong Hospital 2117 Riemland Road Bohlokong Bethlehem 9701	058 304 3023
	Tshepong TCC National District Hospital, Roth Avenue, Willows Bloemfontein 9301	051 448 6023
GAUTENG	Baragwanath/Nthabiseng TCC Chris Hanani Bara Hospital, Chris Hanani Road, Diepkloof	011 933 1206
	Kopanong TCC Kopanong Hospital, Duncanville, Vereeniging	016 428 5959
	Laudium TCC Laudium Hospital & Community Health Centre, Laudium	012 374 3710
	Lenasia TCC Lenasia Hospital, Lenasia South, Johannesburg	011 211 0632
	Mamelodi TCC Mamelodi Day Hospital	012 841 8413
	Masakhane TCC Tembisa Hospital, Tembisa	011 923 2180
Sinakekelwe TCC Natal Springs Hospital	011 909 5832	

KWAZULU-NATAL	Edendale TCC Edendale Hospital, Pietermaritzburg	033 395 4325
	Madadeni TCC Madadeni Hospital, Newcastle	034 328 8000 ext 8514
	Empangeni TCC Ngwelezana Hospital, Empangeni	035 901 7000
	Phoenix TCC Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital	031 502 1719
	Port Shepstone TCC Port Shepstone Regional Hospital, Port Shepstone	039 688 6021
	RK Khan TCC RK Khan Hospital, Westcliffe	031 459 6000
	Stanger TCC Stanger Provincial Hospital, Stanger	032 437 6000
	Umlazi TCC Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital, Umlazi	031 907 8496
LIMPOPO	Groblersdal TCC Groblersdal Hospital, Groblersdal	013 262 3024
	Mangkweng TCC Mangkweng Hospital, Polokwane	015 286 1000
	Mokopane TCC Mokopane Hospital, Mokopane	015 483 4000
	Musina TCC Musina Hospital, Musina	072 287 5263
	Nkhensani TCC Nkhensani Hospital, Giyani	015 812 0227
	Seshego TCC Seshego Hospital, Seshego	015 223 0483
	Tshilidzini TCC Tshilidzini Hospital, Thohoyandou	015 964 3257
MPUMALANGA	Ermelo TCC Ermelo Hospital, Ermelo	017 811 2031
	Themba TCC Themba Hospital, Kabokweni	013 796 9623
	Tonga TCC Tonga Hospital, Nkomazi	013 780 9231
	Witbank TCC Witbank Hospital, Witbank	013 653 2208
NORTHERN CAPE	De Aar TCC Central Karoo Hospital, De Aar	053 631 2123
	Galeshewe TCC Galeshewe Day Hospital, Kimberley	053 830 8900
	Kuruman TCC Kuruman Hospital, Kuruman	073 334 3208
	Springbok TCC Van Niekerk Hospital, Springbok	027 712 1551

NORTH WEST	Job Shimankane Tabane TCC, Job Shimankana Tabane Hospital, Corner Heystek & Bosch Street, Rustenburg	014 590 5474
	Klerksdorp TCC Klerksdorp Hospital, Benji Oliphant Road Jouberton, Klerksdorp	018 465 2828
	Mafikeng TCC Mafikeng Provincial Hospital, Lichtenburg Road, Mafikeng	018 383 7001
	Potchefstroom TCC Potchefstroom Hospital, Cnr Botha & Chris Hani Street, Potchefstroom	018 293 4659
WESTERN CAPE	George TCC, George Provincial Hospital, Davidson Road, Glen Barrie, George	044 873 4858
	Heideveld TCC, Heideveld Community Health Clinic, Heideveld Road, Heideveld	021 699 0474
	Karl Bremer TCC, Karl Bremer Hospital, Corner Mike Pienaar Boulevard & Frans Conradie Avenue, Belville	021 948 0861
	Khayelitsha TCC, Khayelitsha Hospital Khayelitsha Community Health Centre, Lwandle Road, Site B, Khayelitsha	021 360 4570
	Worcester TCC Worcester Hospital, Murray Street, Worcester	023 348 1294
	Wesfleur TCC Wesfleur Hospital, Wesfleur Circle, Atlantis	021 010 042

NATIONAL HELPLINE NUMBERS

National GBV Helpline	0800 150 150
LifeLine South Africa	0861 322 322
AIDS Helpline	0800 012 322
National Counselling Line	0861 322 322
Childline South Africa	0800 055 555
South African Police Service	10111
Legal Aid	0800 110 110

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

AIDS Consortium	011 403 0265
Crime Stop	086 001 0111
Human Rights Commission	011 877 3600
Lifeline Sexual Health Line	086 132 2322
Love Life	080 012 1900
Marie Stopes South Africa	080 011 7785
People Opposing Women Abuse	011 642 4345
Rape Crisis	021 447 9762
Tears Foundation (free SMS helpline)	*134*7355#
Suicide Help	080 056 7567
The South African Depression and Anxiety Group	080 021 2223

SONKE GENDER JUSTICE OFFICES

CAPE TOWN

1st Floor Sir Lowry Studios
95 Sir Lowry Road
Cape Town
8001
Tel: 021 423 7088

GUGULETHU

NY1 Clinic
Opposite Gugulethu
Mall
Western Cape
Tel: 021 633 3140

JOHANNESBURG

4th Floor Stevenson Building
62 Juta Street
Braamfontein
2017
Tel: 011 339 3589

EAST LONDON

Ground Floor
14 Stewart Drive
Berea
East London, 5241
Tel: 073 233 4560

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