

Responding to Sexual Misconduct/Interpersonal Violence Disclosures

Providing a sensitive and supportive response to a disclosure validates the person's experience and can impact their willingness to seek further help. However, it is important to be aware of the responsibilities and limitations of your role.

The three most important things you can do are to:

1. listen, without interruption or judgement
2. believe and validate their experiences
3. provide information that will support them to make their own choices (as much as possible) in what happens next.

You do not need to 'fix' the problem for them, give them solutions, investigate what happened, discuss it with others, or provide advice. But, as an employee of UWO, you are legally required to report the disclosure to the Title IX Coordinator. This report sets in motion the processes to ensure a response of safety and support for the victim/survivor.

Practical Tips for Responding to Disclosures

- Actively listen, without interruption, giving the person time to share their experience.
- Show that you believe what they are saying to you.
- Affirm that they have done the right thing in disclosing their experience.
- When responding to disclosures, let them know how courageous they have been in coming forward and highlight their strengths.
- Take their fears or concerns seriously.
- Emphasize that they are not to blame for their experience.
- Be clear about the limits (if any) to confidentiality. Tell them you are a mandated reporter and what will happen next ([After Disclosing Handout](#)). Ask if they would like to fill out the Title IX form with you.
- Provide information about internal and external support services ([Rights and Resources Handouts-campus specific](#)).

What NOT to Do When Responding to a Disclosure

- Talk about your own experiences of sexual or interpersonal violence.
- Ask a lot of questions to try and find out details.
- Judge or criticize their choices.

- Make comments that imply there is something they could have done to 'protect themselves'.
- Promise you will keep their confidence.
- Get angry or frustrated at the person or their experience.
- Try to 'fix' the problem for them.
- Tell them what to do.
- Talk negatively about the perpetrator.
- Try to force them to disclose information – let them guide what they tell you.
- Provide advice.

References

SAFE + EQUAL (safeandequal.org)