

Healing from Sexual Assault

Where there is breath, there is life.
Where there is life, there is hope.

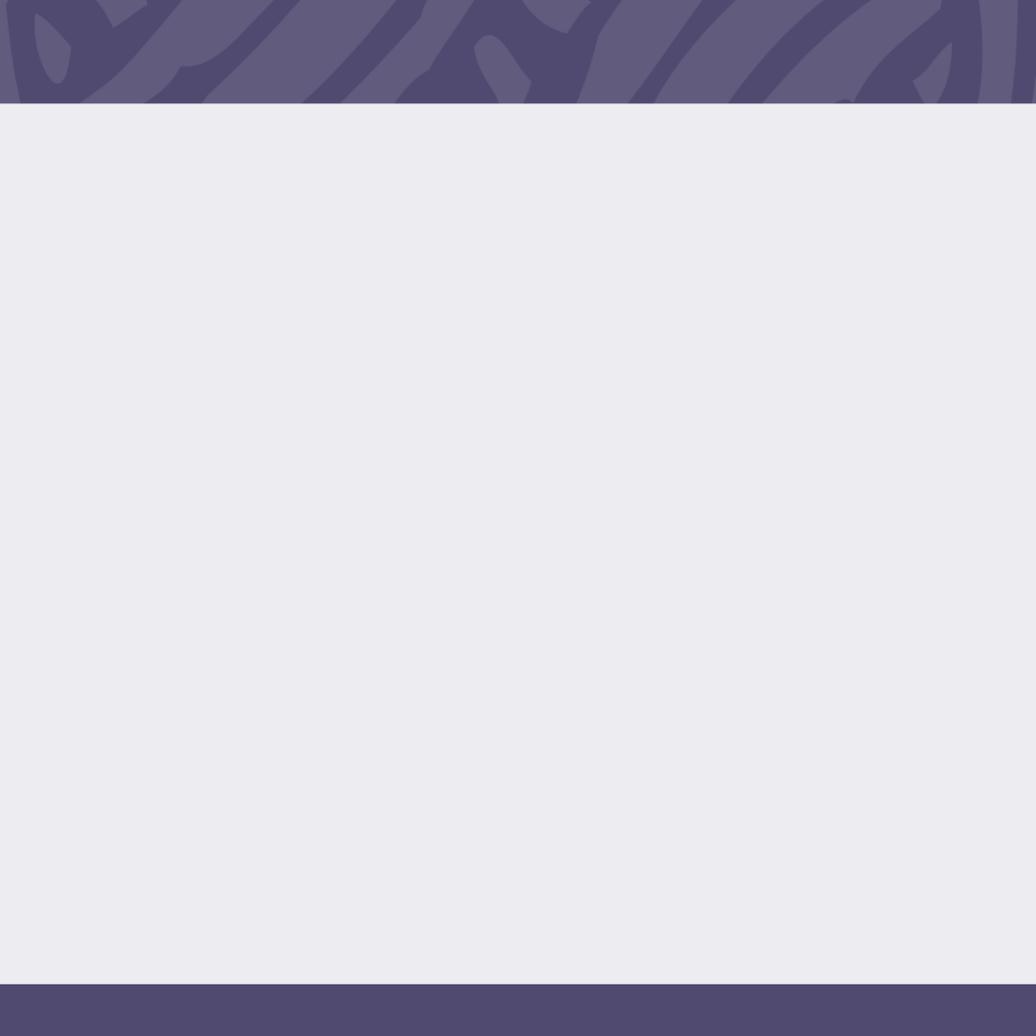


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Where there is breath, there is life

Your mind, body, and spirit are connected; each impacts the other. Being impacted by a sexual assault can affect your whole being. When one or more parts of yourself are harmed, all parts are harmed. By working on and restoring one part, all parts can benefit.

When anyone experiences sexual assault, focused breathing can help the healing process.

Take a breath. When we focus on our breath, we can think more clearly, have more control of our actions or reactions, and restore our energy.

Low and slow. The stronger and most restorative breath comes from breathing low in the body, from below your belly button, rather than high in the chest. Your inhale should fill your belly and your exhale should be long and s-l-o-w.

Take three breaths. Stop. Relax your shoulders and neck. Sigh. Put one hand on your belly to remind you where the breath should come from. Inhale naturally and exhale low and s-l-o-w. Release the tension.

Adapted from Norma Wong from Move to End Violence

Where there is life, there is hope

Hope is the life force that keeps us going. Hope can help you recover more easily from the trauma.

When you are sexually assaulted, you can start to believe that you don't have any control over your options.

Regaining or maintaining control over your own thoughts, decisions, and actions can help to rebuild your sense of power and freedom from the domination and violence.

Begin to undo the impact of the sexual assault through the practice of slowing down - listen, think, speak, eat, and walk slower. Make one decision at a time.

Practice Daily Self Care

The most important step you can take is to practice daily **self care**.

Kindness – Be compassionate with yourself.

Rest – Try to sleep six to eight hours.

Breathe – Practice breathing deeply, low and s-l-o-w.

Water – Drink water and stay hydrated throughout the day.

Support – If you are able, spend time with friends and family who accept and support you, and make you happy.

Spaciousness – Take five minutes a day to do something restorative for you (drink a cup of tea, take a quiet moment to think of something positive, or take a short walk.)

What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any behavior or contact of a sexual nature that is unwanted or makes a person uncomfortable. Sexual assault occurs any time a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity.

Sexual assault includes a range of behaviors which may take the form of degrading verbal comments, unwanted touches, invasions of personal privacy and space, or rape. Some forms of sexual assault, such as rape, violate our criminal laws. Any form of sexual assault is unacceptable.

Sexual assault can be a humiliating and terrifying experience. Sometimes individuals fear for their lives. In other cases, sexual activity without consent may not have violent overtones, but it can still radically affect the individual who was sexually assaulted in many aspects of life.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone. Girls and women and people who are gender nonconforming and who are from marginalized populations based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, ability, immigration or refugee status experience sexual assault at higher rates.

Questioning Why You Were Sexually Assaulted

Replaying the incident and wondering what you could have done to stop the assault is normal. Sexual assault can be a life-threatening situation and whatever you did to survive was the right thing to do.

It is common to blame yourself. You may be wondering about your own actions – could you have done something differently that would have prevented the assault from happening? Nothing you did caused the sexual assault.

Many individuals who have been sexually assaulted report that they “froze”. This reaction is normal and is called tonic immobility. Tonic immobility means the body is literally paralyzed by fear – unable to move, speak, or cry out. It is a common reaction to experiencing sexual assault and a reaction that is often misunderstood or used to place blame on the person who was harmed.

Reactions Following a Sexual Assault

Everyone reacts differently to a sexual assault; there is no “right” or “wrong” response to sexual assault. Here are examples of reactions you may or may not experience after a sexual assault:

- **Physical Reactions:** Change in sleeping patterns, nightmares, headaches, loss of appetite or overeating, stomach problems, muscle tension, lack of concentration, impaired memory, and/or increased use of drugs or alcohol.
- **Emotional Reactions:** Denial, fear, sadness, anger, guilt, shame, confusion, embarrassment, flashbacks, hypervigilance (heightened senses), mood swings, irritability, depression, and suicidal thoughts. You may feel very upset, very calm, or anything in between. It may feel like you are on a roller coaster - with your emotions going up and down at any given moment.
- **Social Reactions:** Fear of being in public or social situations, fear of being alone, withdrawing from friends and family, difficulty trusting others, trouble with physical intimacy in relationships, and feeling isolated from others.

Any of these responses is normal and appropriate after experiencing the trauma of a sexual assault.

What Do I Do Next? Options After a Sexual Assault

Safety: If the assault has happened within the last few hours, safety is your priority. Get to a safe place, and ask a friend to stay with you.

Preserve Evidence: Try to preserve any evidence. You can decide whether you want the forensic kit to be anonymous for a later case or if you want it to be part of a report to law enforcement right now. Avoid drinking, bathing, showering, douching, brushing your teeth or changing clothes. Collecting physical evidence usually needs to occur within 96-108 hours after the assault.

Medical Care: You can access medical care through a personal physician, your local health district, Planned Parenthood, or your university health services office. Forensic exams, including the collection of evidence for a rape kit, cannot be done at these agencies; but, you can have any injuries treated and be tested for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and pregnancy. You may choose to go to a hospital for medical care. If you go to a hospital, the hospital may contact law enforcement to report that you are a victim of a crime. If the sexual assault is recent (usually within 96-108 hours), the hospital may perform, at your choice, a forensic exam to collect evidence of the assault to assist with possible prosecution of a criminal act by the state. If it is possible, bring a change of clothing with you. Any clothes worn at the time of the assault, and sometimes afterward, may be collected as evidence.

Forensic Exam: Forensic exams are lengthy, ranging between three and six hours. Exams, including the collection of a forensic evidence kit, often called a rape kit, are often performed by a physician, a nurse or sometimes a sexual assault nurse examiner known as a “SANE” or “SAFE” nurse. The exam involves the collection of bodily fluids and an examination of the oral, anal, and vaginal cavities. This exam may be paid for by the Idaho Crime Victims’ Compensation Program. You should be aware that if you have private insurance, your insurance may be billed for the exam prior to being covered by Victims Compensation. The medical bill you or your insurance company receives may indicate services were for a sexual assault exam.

Advocacy: You may choose to work with a community or tribal advocacy program. In Idaho, most advocacy programs provide services to individuals who are impacted by either domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Community and tribal advocates are bound by confidentiality and will not report the sexual assault to law enforcement or the hospital unless you choose to report. There may be an exception when the victim is a minor or vulnerable adult, and a mandated report is necessary. Advocates can help you understand what to expect if you pursue criminal action, can assist you in safety planning, and can provide referrals to other service providers. There is no cost associated with accessing help from an advocate.

Counseling: You may choose to speak with a counselor. You may be able to access counseling through your employer's employee assistance program, your university health center, community or tribal advocacy program, or through a private referral. Your local rape crisis center, advocacy program, or your physician may be able to give you a list of counselors skilled in working with individuals who have experienced sexual assault.

College or University Reporting Options: If you are attending a college or university, you have the option to report the assault to your college. Colleges are required under Title IX to ensure an environment free from sex and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence. Schools are required to ensure that individuals who are sexually assaulted are able to continue their education. Examples of options a college may offer to someone who is sexually assaulted include academic accommodations, dorm and class transfers, and mental health support. Regardless of whether you report the assault to law enforcement, the college can take its own actions, including possible suspension or expulsion of the offender from the school. If you attend a college or university, refer to your student policy to see what options are available to you. Your college or university may also have on-campus resource, such as a Gender Equity or a Women's Center or Title IX coordinator, that can provide you with resources.

Criminal Action: You have the right to file a police report if a crime has occurred. The length of time that has passed since the sexual assault will determine what may happen next. If you report the sexual assault to law enforcement you may be assigned a victim witness coordinator who will assist you through the criminal justice process to lessen re-victimization and connect you to resources. As employees of the criminal justice system, victim witness coordinators have limits on confidentiality and may need to share information you disclosed to them with others such as an officer, detective, or prosecutor and it may be required to provide the information to the defendant through the defense attorney. This is especially important if you share information regarding your safety, a medical emergency, when the information relates to child abuse and/or when the nondisclosure of the information could interfere with the investigation or prosecution of the case. After the law enforcement investigation, the prosecutor in the location where the crime was committed has the discretion to determine whether or not to file criminal charges.

Crime Victims Compensation: Forensic exams may be paid for by Crime Victims Compensation. If the sexual assault was reported to law enforcement, the cost of counseling sought as a result of victimization may also be covered by Crime Victims' Compensation. For more information call 1-800-950-2110 or go to <http://www.crimevictimcomp.idaho.gov/benefits.html>

Civil Legal Remedies

You may want to seek civil (noncriminal) legal representation to address the impact of problems caused by the sexual assault.

- **Privacy:** An attorney may be able to assist you in protecting your right to privacy by requesting notice and/or challenging a subpoena for your records, and ensuring service providers understand the laws governing your privacy.
- **Safety:** An attorney can work with your campus or school, landlord or local housing authority, and employers to create safety plans, and/or request accommodations to increase your safety and well-being.
- **Housing:** An attorney may be able to negotiate with your landlord or housing authority to allow you to terminate your lease or transfer your lease to a different location. You have the right not to be discriminated against in housing because you were a victim of sexual assault.
- **Financial:** You may have experienced a financial loss as a result of the assault, including a loss of income and money spent for medical bills and counseling. An attorney may be able to help you apply for public assistance and can help determine if you can hold a third party liable for your sexual assault.

- **Employment:** An attorney can help you enforce your right not to be discriminated against by your employer as a result of the sexual assault. An attorney can help you secure leave, unemployment insurance, accommodations, enhance the safety of your work environment, or a transfer of yourself or the perpetrator or dismissal of the perpetrator.
- **Education:** As a result of the sexual assault you may have missed or dropped out of school, had difficulty maintaining your grades, lost financial aid or tuition assistance, or experienced other academic, social, or cultural problems. An attorney may be able to negotiate with your school to make accommodations to assist you. Additionally, an attorney may be able to assist you in a student disciplinary action against the offender and enforce the rights you have under federal law.
- **Immigration:** You may be entitled to a U-Visa, which allows victims of certain crimes to stay and/or work in the United States (and can lead to permanent residency) if they assist in the investigation or prosecution of a crime. An attorney may be able to assist you in working with immigration officials to allow you to stay in the United States to finish school or continue at your job. A civil attorney may assist you in ensuring that your legal status is not used against you.

- **Crime Victim's Rights:** You can hire an attorney at any time to assist you in navigating the criminal justice system and enforcing your rights under the Idaho Crime Victims' Rights Act. A civil attorney cannot bring criminal charges against the offender. The prosecutor in the location where the crime was committed has the sole authority and discretion to determine whether or not to file criminal charges.

Idaho Legal Aid Services, Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, or the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence provide free civil legal representation to individuals who have been sexually assaulted that have a civil legal need arising from the sexual assault. Call for an appointment.

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence 1-888-293-6118

Idaho Legal Aid Services

Boise (208) 345-0106

Caldwell (208) 454-2591

Coeur d'Alene (208) 667-9559

Idaho Falls (208) 524-3660

Lewiston (208) 743-1556

Nampa (208) 475-5723

Pocatello (208) 233-0079

Twin Falls (208) 734-7024

Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program 1-208-334-4510 or 1-800-221-3295

Overview of Sexual Assault Program Services

Sexual assault programs generally provide these services:

Information – Understand your rights and options, how to heal from the trauma, and the sociopolitical root causes of sexual violence.

Accompaniment – Advocates can accompany you to a medical exam, to report to your college or school, or to make a criminal report.

Encouragement – Programs offer understanding, respect, and embrace diverse cultural realities and lived experiences.

Support – Advocates can refer you to counseling, assist with finding a support group, or provide individual crisis intervention and advocacy to you.

Increase Access to Community Resources – Programs can connect you to government benefits, healthcare, reproductive health needs, immigration relief, housing, employment resources and more.

Promote Social Change – Programs promote behaviors or social norms to end violence against girls and women and people who are gender oppressed.

For Families and Friends

Sexual assault is a devastating experience for individuals who were harmed and those close to them. Family members and friends experience a wide range of emotions and reactions after someone they love is sexually assaulted. Understanding that you are experiencing some of the same feelings as your loved one is important. These feelings and reactions are normal.

- **Loss:** You may experience a sense of loss because the person you care about has been changed by this experience and life as you know it may also be changed for a period of time.
- **Revenge:** Seeking revenge against the perpetrator is a common feeling or urge for those close to the person who was harmed. Your feelings of rage and wanting to hold the person accountable are completely understandable; however, acting on this urge will not be helpful to the individual who was sexually assaulted. Many victims experience added stress when family or friends threaten action against the perpetrator because they fear for the safety of their family or friends. Deciding to act on feelings of revenge or rage can make the person who was assaulted feel powerless all over again. Finding alternative ways to release your anger is important to everyone's well-being.

- **Blaming:** Sexual assaults may occur under circumstances where the victim was involved in activities that others may disapprove of (drinking, going to a party, etc.). Keep in mind that any decision to participate in these activities is separate from the sexual assault. There is no behavior or circumstance that ever justifies anyone being sexually assaulted by another person.
- **Guilt:** You may feel guilty that you were not able to protect your loved one and put extra effort into protection. It is important to talk to your loved one about your feelings. Your concern for your loved one's safety may be appreciated, but over-protectiveness and restricting freedom may be interpreted as mistrust or blame for what happened. One of the most important steps for victims is to regain a sense of power over choices and actions in their lives. After an assault, a victim may become easily upset when others make decisions for them.

The *Information & Resources* section of this handbook contains a list of resources for you and your loved one.

Why Gender Violence Happens

Gender violence is a problem in our society that affects all communities. Gender violence can include sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and sex trafficking. While everyone is hurt by gender violence - girls, women and people who are gender oppressed are hurt by abuse and rape the most.

Gender violence is a common occurrence because of our cultural beliefs and what we consider to be “normal” or “acceptable.” In our culture, men are given more value and power than any other gender. This leads to high rates of gender violence.

Gender violence does not happen in isolation. Gender violence is supported by larger forces or **systemic oppressions**, like patriarchy, which takes power over and harms girls and women. Systemic oppressions are the ways in which history, culture, beliefs, institutional practices and policies interact to keep a ranking or power over others.

Our society ranks or values human-beings based on identities, like gender, race, national origin, class, sexuality, ability, immigration or refugee status. Ranking human-beings supports the **power and privileges** that some groups of people have to keep power over others.

Individuals do not act in isolation, but are influenced by other people, social structures, and our society

Systemic Oppressions like Patriarchy – Large forces which dominate and harm groups of people based on gender and other identities.

Government, Religious, and Community Structures – May educate and enforce oppression and dominance.

Families, Friends, and Peers – Influence us to accept discrimination (i.e. sexism), inequity (i.e. strict gender roles) or oppression.

Individuals – May choose to use violence that is fueled and supported by a dynamic system of power and dominance.



Towards Thriving

Here are some of the ways you can move from surviving to thriving:

Spaciousness – Breathing, making time for quiet reflection or meditation, or being in nature are all ways to increase your awareness to see things for what they are in that very moment.

Strong Social Network – Being around caring, supportive people is important in times of difficulty. While talking with a loved one, family member, or friend will not make troubles go away, it allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback, and come up with possible solutions.

Being Optimistic – Staying positive can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the problem. It means understanding that setbacks are only in that moment and that you have the skills needed to address challenges.

One Small Action – Decide on an area of life that is important to you and take one small action. Think about the challenges you might face and be ready with a plan. Small steps can renew hope!

Sense of Purpose in Your Life – Get involved in your community, stay connected to or explore spirituality, celebrate traditions and culture, or participate in activities that are meaningful to you.

Towards Liberation

Many women and people who are gender oppressed who are abused or raped want to get involved in their communities to end gender violence. Here are ways to make a difference in your community:

- Express your experiences through art, photography, or dance.
- Learn more about feminism - the belief in social, economic and political equity across genders. Read authors like bell hooks or watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk "We Should All be Feminists."
- Advocate for gender, race and social equity. Idaho can and should do better. In a recent national study by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Status of Women in the States: 2015", Idaho ranked 50th overall on the status of women.
- Join the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence and receive regular newsletters on ways to be involved in creating communities where gender violence is no longer a common occurrence.
Go to www.engagingvoices.org.

Glossary

Coercion – Forcing someone to do something by using force or threats.

Empowerment – Practice of increasing self-awareness, raising consciousness and building confidence.

Equity – Everyone receives what they need rather than the same (equality) to thrive by taking into account the lived experience of individuals.

Liberation – No longer being controlled or dominated by an outside force.

Oppression – Exercise of power and domination over another.

Patriarchy – Social system in which power is held by men and withholds opportunity from women.

Restorative – Renewing strength, health, and consciousness.

Social Norm – Behaviors and beliefs that are valued and supported in a society.

Systemic Oppression – Oppression is built into institutions like government and education systems and gives power and positions of dominance to some groups of people over other groups of people. Systems of oppression are built around what are understood to be “norms” in our societies.

Information & Resources

RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network)

1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or www.rainn.org

Free, confidential assistance 24/7 on sexual assault and can connect you with a local program that can provide assistance. RAINN is multilingual via phone and the RAINN website has a “chat” feature to talk with an advocate.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center

1-888-373-7888 or traffickingresourcecenter.org.

Available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24/7. Assistance offered in more than 200 languages.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Free, confidential assistance 24/7 on domestic violence and can connect you with a local program that can provide assistance.

Know Your IX

www.knowyourix.org

A survivor and youth-led organization that aims to empower students to end sexual and dating violence in their schools.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. By dialing 1-800-273-TALK (8255), the call is routed to the nearest crisis center. The Lifeline's national network of local crisis centers provide crisis counseling and mental health referrals day and night. You can also go to www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org to chat with a crisis counselor online.

The Trevor Project

1-866-488-7386

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people ages 13-24. You can also chat online at www.thetrevorproject.org

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence

1-888-293-6118 or www.engagingvoices.org

The Idaho Coalition website has additional information on sexual assault as well as a list of rape crisis centers located throughout Idaho that can assist you.

Idaho Civil Legal Resources

Idaho Legal Aid Services, Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program and the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence may be able to provide free civil legal services. Call to make an appointment to talk to an attorney.

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence

1-888-293-6118 or 208-384-0419

Idaho Legal Aid Services

Boise (208) 345-0106

Caldwell (208) 454-2591

Coeur d'Alene (208) 667-9559

Idaho Falls (208) 524-3660

Lewiston (208) 743-1556

Nampa (208) 475-5723

Pocatello (208) 233-0079

Twin Falls (208) 734-7024

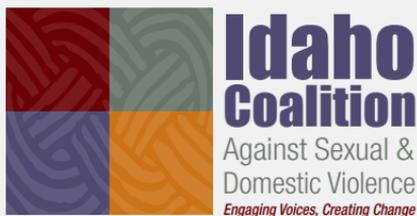
Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program

1-208-334-4510 or 1-800-221-3295

This handbook provides information about sexual assault and the services available in our communities. We encourage you to go through this handbook with an advocate in a community or tribal sexual assault program.

A list of Idaho's community and tribal sexual assault programs can be found at www.engagingvoices.org under "Members" beneath the "About" tab.

If you would like to talk to someone about how you are feeling, what your options are, or how to learn about specific services available in your area, please call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or log on to www.rainn.org



Linen Building, 1402 W Grove St., Boise, ID 83702 • 1-888-293-6118 • www.engagingvoices.org