



## TRAUMA SKILLS INSTITUTE

### Helpful Things to Say

- I trust your decision
- There are different types of help available
- You deserve to feel safe
- You are strong and capable
- I believe in your ability to heal
- I believe you
- It took a lot of courage to say that out loud / share that with someone
- Thank you for sharing that with me
- How can I help? / What kind of support is most important to you right now?
- You are worthy of safety / What are some ways to increase your safety in that choice?

### Useful Statements

- What I hear you saying is...is that correct?
- I believe you—and want to help.
- You deserve safety—you did not deserve this.
- Do you have people you can trust to support you? What does it look like to you?
- It's not uncommon for people to not be supportive. That's about them, not you.

### Things NOT to Say

- “SHOULD” – should is shamey!
- I understand
- Are you sure? Were you drinking? / What were you wearing?
- Did you report? **\*\* (If mandated reporter, be mindful of tone & reword!)**
- Why haven't you told anyone? Why did you wait so long to say anything? / Why do you care now?
- Haven't you hooked up with them before?
- I'm going to kill (perpetrator)!
- God has a plan for this / This was all a part of God's plan for your life
- Crying, becoming frantic, panicked
- Disclose your own abuse



**Rule #1:** It's not about you.

**Rule #2:** Remain calm and composed – no crying or panicking.

**Rule #3:** We do not touch people without permission.

**Rule #4:** Self-awareness leads to better support for victims.

## CONTROL YOUR:

Breathing, emotions, facial expressions, movements (avoid fidgeting), pace (of speaking and breathing), and presence;

responses (remain *them*-focused and strengths-based)

## SURRENDER CONTROL:

Their feelings, choices, boundaries, fears; fixing the problem;

long silences - be okay with quiet and/or space fillers (from them, not you)

## NON-VERBAL TIPS: Facial Expressions & Body Language

- **Lean in slightly, head tilted** (either direction)
- **Keep face muscles relaxed** (“botox eyebrows”, no jaw dropping)
- **Maintain an open body position.**
- **Remain present during ‘awkward silences’**
- **Sit alongside and angled *toward* the person rather than directly opposite them.**
- **Maintain eye contact** (but pay attention to cues for discomfort)

- **Minimize the power dynamic.**

Attempt to place yourself in a position where their eyes are at least slightly above yours. If they are sitting, also sit. Being on the same level as someone appears less threatening.

### **Hold the Space – Honor their experience**

- Recognize and respect that they are more than the hurt and crime they experienced, and know that they may not be able to see themselves clearly beyond the experience yet.
- Their fears and feelings are valid, even when you don't agree. Safety for them may not mean what safety means for you.