

TRAUMA & HEALING

WHAT FRIENDS AND FAMILY NEED TO KNOW

1. ***Everyone heals differently.***

Respect multiple coping styles.

2. ***Do not force the survivor to talk about it.***

Survivors who choose not to talk about trauma can be just as healthy as those who do.¹

3. ***Some people may wait years to speak about trauma.***

Reasons might include fear of being labeled a victim or a past experience of being blamed.²

4. ***Healing takes time.***

Avoid saying that a trauma survivor should just “let it go” and move on.³ Understand that your relationship with them is valuable to their healing. The relationship may have challenges and moments of strength, but it is normal for the relationship to adjust as the survivor is healing, feeling more empowered, and rebuilding trust.

5. ***Practice supportive interaction techniques.***⁴

Ask open-ended questions. Strive to be nonjudgmental. Point out the person’s strengths. Try not to minimize. Allow for silence. Reflect the emotion being described (“It sounds like...”, “No wonder you feel...”). Join in enjoyable activities to help establish a normal routine.⁵

¹ Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (US). Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2014. (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 57.)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207201/>

² Joan Cook, “Why many people don’t talk about traumatic events until long after they occur,” TheConversation.com, August 1, 2016.

<https://theconversation.com/why-many-people-dont-talk-about-traumatic-events-until-long-after-they-occur-63248>

³ Támara Hill, MS, LPC, “7 Ways to Avoid Re-Traumatizing A Trauma Victim,” PsychCentral,

<https://blogs.psychcentral.com/caregivers/2015/06/7-ways-to-avoid-re-traumatizing-a-trauma-victim/>

⁴ Melissa Ming Foynes and Jennifer J. Freyd, “The impact of skills training on responses to the disclosure of mistreatment,” Psychology of Violence, 1(1) 2011, 66-77.

<http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2011-01402-007>

⁵ Phoenix Australia Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, “Recovery: Helping Others.”

<http://phoenixaustralia.org/recovery/helping-others/>