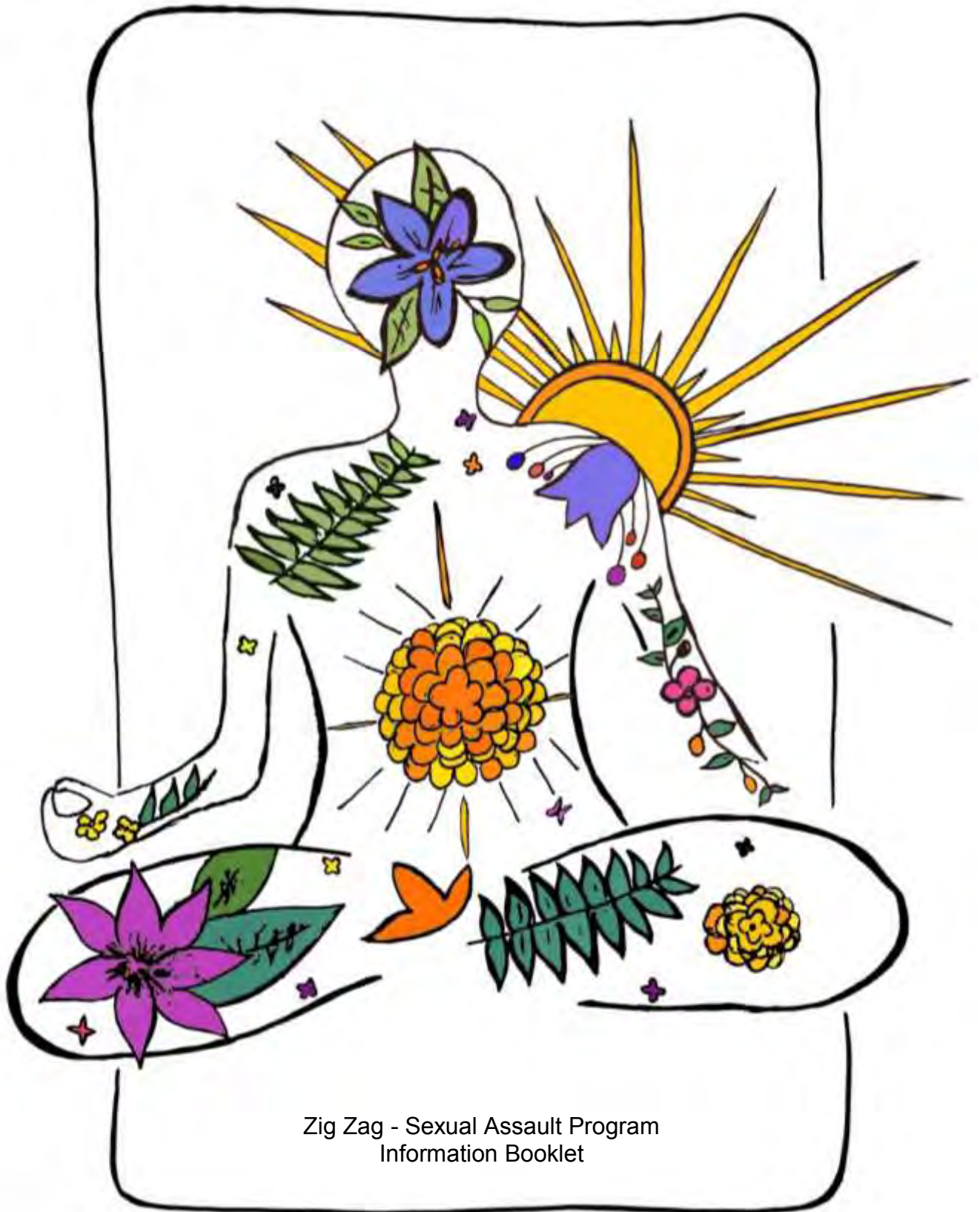


# Healing Is Possible



Zig Zag - Sexual Assault Program  
Information Booklet

First published in 1997  
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Artwork contributed by young women. Initials and age shown with each art piece where possible.

Content compiled by young women and Zig Zag workers.

Layout and artwork support by local community artist.

Zig Zag would particularly like to acknowledge all the young women who have contributed to this edition in a variety of ways – from the many hours of meetings and input by the working group, to those who gave of their art, to those who shared opinions at different stages. It is the input and expertise of these young women that make this booklet so valuable. Working alongside these young women has been an honour and an inspiration.

(FRONT COVER ARTWORK CONTRIBUTED BY SA, 23 YEARS OLD)



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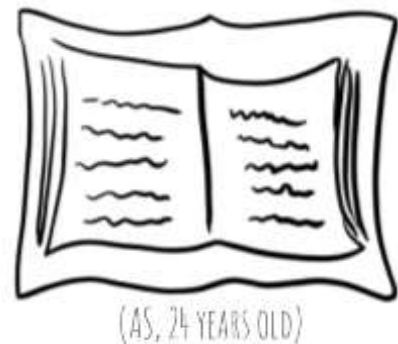
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# Definitions and Terminology

As you read this booklet you will see there are particular terms that we have chosen to use throughout the text. We have deliberately chosen these terms and would like to share with you our reasons for doing this:

We have used **the term 'he'** for the person who abuses and commits sexual violence – the **perpetrator**. We have done this as, whilst there can be female perpetrators of sexual violence, evidence shows that perpetrators of this violence are overwhelmingly male. Regardless of who assaulted you, the information in this booklet is still equally important for all survivors.

We have chosen to use the term **'Sexual Violence'** as the general term covering many different types of sexually abusive behaviour. Sexual Violence can include sexual harassment, abuse/assault, sexual touch, rape/attempted rape, incest, recording sexual activity, distribution of sexually explicit images of a person without their consent, forcing someone to watch something sexual, and sexual contact with a child.



## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS:

- A crime and is 'any form of unwanted or forced sexual behaviour or act that occurs without consent. Sexual violence covers a wide range of sexual behaviours or acts';  
(Queensland Police Service, (2018) as cited in QSAN, 'What is sexual Assault?' Retrieved from <https://qsan.org.au/what-is-sexual-assault/>)
- Any act of a sexual nature which happens to a person (adult or child) without their consent (agreement). This includes any act of a sexual nature that has been coerced/forced/pressured;
- Always an act of power by one person over another person in a less powerful position. It functions not only to harm a person but also to control that person;
- A profound abuse of the human rights of the person who experiences it, and is largely (although not entirely) perpetrated by members of one social group (males) against members of other social groups (women and children); and
- 'It is a humiliating and degrading experience. It has an emotional, physical, financial and social cost, not only to those directly affected, but also for the community as a whole'.

(Qld Police Service (5 Nov 2019). Retrieved from <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/units/victims-of-crime/support-for-victims-of-crime/adult-sexual-assault/>)

## CONSENT IS:

When a person is freely willing and in agreement about doing something. It means that a person wants to be involved in an action and feels they can say no if they are uncomfortable or change their mind. Consent for a sexual act must be freely given, the person must be aware of what they are agreeing to do, and the person must not feel pressured or worried about what will happen if they say no. Any sexual activity without consent, is a form of sexual violence/assault.

*Consent is:*

- *'Being able to say yes or no when asked to do something and being comfortable with the decision'.*
- *'Having a choice'.*  
(Zig Zag (2016) Sexual Violence Awareness Month Activity with young people)

## INCEST IS:

- a form of sexual violence that is perpetrated by a family member (including foster, adoptive or step family member);
- recognised as a crime in the Queensland Criminal Code.

It is important to note that the majority of sexual abuse against children occurs within the family context and is perpetrated by a person who holds more power and is in a position of trust in relation to a child or young person. There are many barriers that make it difficult for a child or young person to disclose or report their experiences of sexual abuse by a family member, including: a fear of not being believed; safety concerns and fear of further violence; stigma and shame; not understanding that incest is a crime; and lack of trust in police or service responses. Everyone has the right to be safe within their own family, and to get support when needed.



# Believing It Happened

Sometimes it is hard to believe that sexual violence/assault really happened. Maybe there were people in your life who told you that your experiences didn't happen, you may have become confused and unsure and doubted yourself. It is important for you to recognise that someone did those things to you. It did happen.

If you have experienced any form of sexual violence, then you are not alone. "Young women, (18 – 24 years), experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups."

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017) 'Personal Safety Survey 2016'. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS)*

"1 in 5 Australian women has experienced sexual violence."

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). 'Personal Safety Survey 2016'. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS)*

If you were abused or experienced any form of sexual violence in the past, you may still be dealing with the effects today. You may be having trouble with your studies or work, with relationships, with intimacy, with your health, or in your family. If you have had these experiences, you may feel bad about yourself or think something is wrong with you but these are some of the effects of having experienced the trauma of sexual violence.

It is important to know it is possible to heal from sexual violence. You don't have to live with the effects of it for the rest of your life. If you are able to connect with good support, you can not only heal but thrive.

*(Bass, E. & Davis, L. (2008). The Courage to Heal. HarperCollins Publishers, New York, p.xxiv)*

## MEMORIES

Some people remember their experiences clearly, however for others their memories are fuzzy or unclear. Memories can also be blocked out completely as a way of coping with the pain. What matters is how you felt at the time. A perpetrator wrongfully took control and power from you in order to manipulate you. Your trust was shattered, and the world stopped being safe. You may have felt terrified, hurt, ashamed, or confused. Even abuse that isn't physical can leave deep scars.





THE DECISION TO HEAL  
FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE IS  
A POWERFUL, POSITIVE  
CHOICE!

Once you are ready to process what has happened to you, you may want to get it over with as quickly as possible. However, lasting change can take time. It can be hard work and you may find it difficult to study, work, take care of your children or even make dinner. You may be unable to sleep, eat, or stop crying. It is scary to face the unknown. It can though also be a tremendous relief to process the pain and acknowledge what has happened to you. It is important to find someone you can trust to tell them about your experiences. In time you will find the people and/or organisations you need to support you.



## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET THROUGH THE HARD BITS

Sometimes it gets worse before it gets better. There are things you can do to look after yourself during this time. Remember there is light at the end of the tunnel and things will change for the better.

- Keep yourself safe from possible thoughts of suicide or self-harm by asking and accepting help and making a safety plan.
- Remind yourself that you're not going crazy.
- Find people who you can talk to (support workers, counsellors, friends, youth workers, other survivors, etc.).
- Allow yourself time to safely think about the violence as much as you need.
- Drop any responsibilities that aren't essential.
- Try to avoid the use of drugs or alcohol to stop the pain. Numbing your feelings might only make it last longer.
- You deserve to be safe and to live free from violence. Ring an organisation that can help you: e.g., Domestic Violence Line (DV Connect), a sexual assault organisation, police, women's organisations, etc., (see a list of phone numbers at the end of this booklet).
- Talk to people who are further along in their healing as they might give you ideas, hope and inspiration.
- Do as many nice things for yourself as possible.



## TIPS FOR DEALING WITH PANIC

Some women who have experienced sexual violence experience panic. Panic is what people feel when emotions seem out of control. You may feel scared, breathless, or notice your heart pounding. The fear sometimes keeps getting stronger and you may want to run away. Panic attacks can be caused by triggers - things in the present that remind you of times you were terrified in the past.

Here are some things you can do if you have a panic attack. (You might like to make your own list of what you think would help you. Not everything suits everybody.):



(AS, 24 YEARS OLD)

- Breathing exercises - try to slow down your breathing by counting to 4 when inhaling and 6 when exhaling.
- Grounding exercises - try to remind yourself you are safe now. Name what you can see around you, what you can touch, taste, hear and smell.
- List - people you can contact or be around who will help, comforting things you can do for yourself and things you can say to yourself which help you get through it.
- Ask for help.

Your list may look something like this:

- Breathe.
- Get my teddy bear.
- Call a friend (name).
- Call another friend if the first isn't available.
- Stroke your pet.
- Take a hot bath.
- Write a hundred times, "I'm safe. They can't hurt me anymore."
- Go for a walk or run.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Pray.
- Write in my diary for fifteen minutes without stopping.
- Watch an old movie on TV.
- Eat something.
- Start again at the top.

Remember that the period of panic will pass. Many women have found that a friend or a counsellor and their own inner strength have given them the hope to go on. You survived the abuse by drawing on your inner resources. You can survive the memories, and in time, they won't take up so much of your thoughts.

## TALKING ABOUT IT

It takes a lot of courage to tell someone what happened to you. You may have tried to tell people before and they didn't believe you or they blamed you. Telling someone may have led to all sorts of changes in your life - like talking to police, going to court or having to live away from your family. You may have never felt safe to tell anyone. When you first tell someone, you may feel both terrified and relieved. It's a big secret to carry around all by yourself. The perpetrator probably wanted you to keep it a secret because he knew it was wrong. You may be afraid about what he or others will do now that you've broken the silence. It is the silence that keeps us isolated. It is a bad secret, one that serves the purpose of keeping you hurt, vulnerable and at risk of further violence. You deserve better.

When you are ready, telling someone about the sexual violence has many benefits:

- You face the truth about your abuse/assault.
- You can get help.
- You get more in touch with your feelings.
- You see your experience through the eyes of a person who cares.
- You create deeper, more honest relationships.
- You join a courageous group of survivors who refuse to suffer in silence.
- You help end sexual violence by breaking the silence in which it thrives.
- You are a model for other survivors.
- You (eventually) feel proud and strong.



*(Bass, E. & Davis, L. (2008), The Courage to Heal, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, p.106)*

*When you tell someone and they listen with care and respect, your life changes dramatically.*

If you're thinking of telling someone, it is important to ask yourself:

- Do I trust this person? Do I feel safe with this person?
- Does this person care about how I feel?
- Does this person love and respect me?
- Have we been able to talk about personal things before?

*(Bass, E. & Davis, L. (2008), The Courage to Heal, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, p.112)*

If you can say yes to these questions, you're choosing someone who's likely to support you. It is up to you to decide when and who you wish to tell. Remember not to give up though - sometimes it takes time to find someone who will listen. You can also talk to one of the sexual assault team at Zig Zag. Often it can help to talk to someone who isn't part of your social circle. Someone who will understand what you are talking about, who won't judge you and who can help you make sense of your experience.

## IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT

Most survivors blame themselves in some way for being sexually assaulted. However, sexual violence is never your fault.

There are lots of reasons why women blame themselves. The perpetrator may have told you that it was your fault. You may have been punished if you told someone. As a child it is scary to believe that the adults on whom you depend are abusing their power. It is simpler to believe that you are responsible. Some young women blame themselves because they took gifts or money from the perpetrator or because there were parts of the relationship or the touch that they enjoyed. This is very confusing, but it doesn't mean you are to blame. The perpetrator used these things to put the blame on you and away from him. If you were able to get some small thing back from the experience, give yourself credit. That was how you survived.

## WHEN IT IS A SECRET

There are lots of ways that someone might have made you do sexual things when you didn't want to.

They might have:

- Been older or bigger than you.
- Been someone you've been taught to obey (a family member or a boss at work, for example).
- Made you feel scared.
- Been someone you trust.
- Made you feel special or important.
- Made you feel like you've got no choice.
- Threatened you.

It is important to remember that no one had or has the right to make you do sexual things when you don't want to. It should always be your choice. If someone made you do things you did not want to do, it is not your fault.

*He knew he was doing something wrong. That's why he made you keep it a secret.*



## YOU MIGHT FEEL

### Confused:

- You might hate the perpetrator now, when they were someone you used to trust.
- You might still like or love them, but hate what they did to you.

### Guilty:

- Because you feel like it's your fault it happened, or you feel like you should have been able to stop it.

### Ashamed:

- Because of the things the perpetrator did.
- Because of what other people might think.
- Because you might have been exposed to your family and friends by the perpetrator.

### Alone:

- Because you think it doesn't happen to anyone else.
- Because it was a secret.

### Angry:

- At the perpetrator.
- At other people for not helping or believing you.
- At yourself for not being able to stop it happening.

### Scared:

- Because you don't want it to happen anymore.
- Because of what they said will happen if you tell anymore.

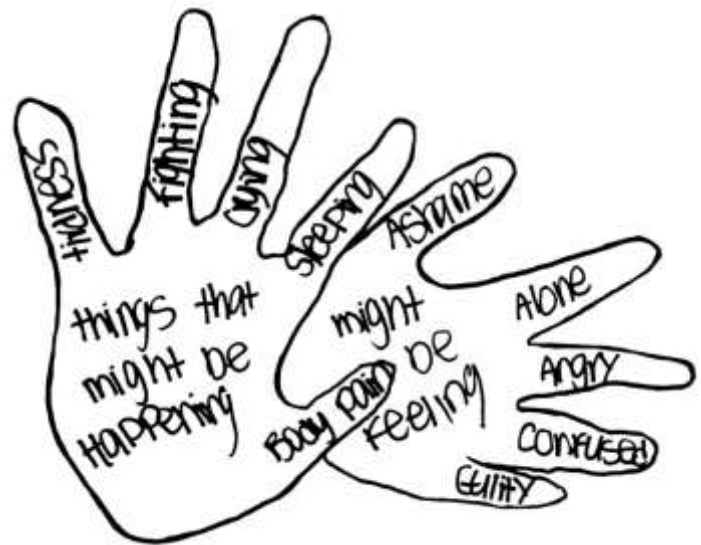
### Sad:

- Because your life isn't the way you want it to be.
- Because your family isn't the way you want it to be.



Some things that might be happening:

- Keeping to yourself.
- Crying a lot.
- Fighting.
- Running away.
- Stealing.
- Not wanting to have anyone touch you.
- Having nightmares.
- Not being able to sleep.
- Sleeping too much.
- Body pains.
- Tiredness.
- Scared of having a boyfriend/ girlfriend/partner.
- Not trusting people.
- Feeling anxious.
- Feeling numb.



You might be:

- Eating too much or not eating enough.
- Over exercising.
- Overworking yourself.
- Doing badly at work or your job.
- Drinking or taking drugs.
- Having sex with lots of people.
- Zoning out from what is happening around you.
- Taking part in risky activities.
- Hurting your body.
- Feeling disconnected from your body.

Everybody copes with trauma in different ways. Going to counselling can help you to learn healthy coping mechanisms.

## SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

- You might be worried about the way you are feeling and the thoughts or memories you are having.
- You might be worried that your body has been damaged, that you're pregnant, or that you have a sexually transmitted illness.
- You might be worried about what will happen if you go to the doctor.
- You might want to know what will happen if you go to the police.
- You might want to know where you can live if you leave home.
- You might want to know how to help if sexual violence is happening to someone you know.

If you would like some support and information about these or other issues, you can talk to one of the sexual assault workers at Zig Zag. Workers at Zig Zag can also tell you about other organisations that could support you or a friend in a number of ways, including with legal and medical assistance.



# Myths About Sexual Violence

“Myths about sexual assault have served to protect offenders and to blame women. They influence court proceedings and confuse the reactions of family and friends who want to support the survivor of sexual assault.”

*(Read My Lips Community Education Campaign)*

Myths about sexual assault help to disguise how often it occurs. Myths also try to shift the blame away from the person who committed the offence.

## SOME OF THE THINGS PEOPLE THINK THAT AREN'T TRUE

**Myth:** what you wear means you are asking to get assaulted or raped.

**Fact:** No one asks to be raped and what you wear does not overrule what one person does to you. Clothing does not mean consent.

**Myth:** I was drinking and did not say no, so it can't be rape.

**Fact:** Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs can prevent a person from being able to consent to sexual acts with another person. It is a crime to have sex with a person who cannot consent due to being intoxicated or drugged. Remember that drinking and taking drugs does not influence good decision making.

**Myth:** Men get so horny that they can't control themselves.

**Fact:** Everyone has to take responsibility for what they do. Everyone's sexual behaviour is under their own control.

**Myth:** I didn't struggle, scream, say 'no', or fight back. It must not have been rape.

**Fact:** Women have been taught not to resist, especially with someone they know. Being scared or feeling like it won't make a difference might have stopped you from resisting. No matter how your body reacts, it does not excuse the crime that has been committed.

**Myth:** They didn't hurt me, so it wasn't rape.

**Fact:** Using threats or blackmail, or not listening when you say "no" are ways of making you have sex when you don't want to - it's still rape.

**Myth:** Sex workers cannot be sexually assaulted.

**Fact:** Everyone has the right to say no to sexual acts they do not.

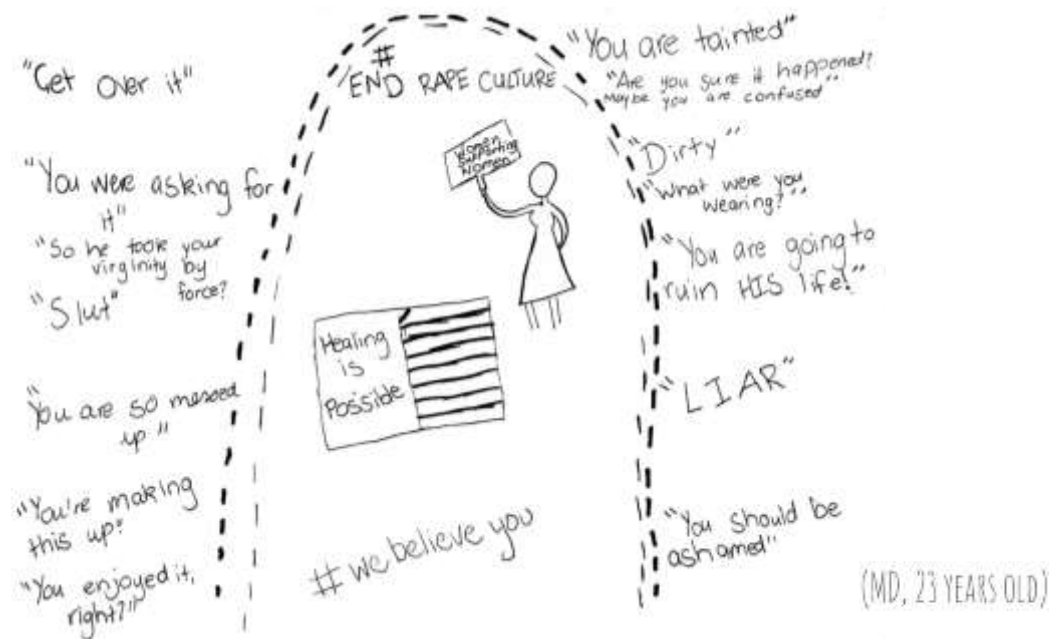
**Myth:** Rapists are "sick" or mad.

**Fact:** Rapists are usually ordinary people who choose to rape or sexually assault another person. They are people who believe the myths about rape themselves, they may blame others for their behaviour and have little respect for women.

**Myth:** When you are sexually assaulted, you will be hysterical and cry.

**Fact:** Everyone reacts differently to trauma, some will cry, others will become angry, and sometimes some won't show any emotions at all.





**Myth:** Because they are my boyfriend/girlfriend/partner, I have to have sex with them.

**Fact:** No-one has the right to make you do something you don't want to. You don't have to have sex, even if:

- Someone spent money on you.
- You've been together for a long time.
- You've had sex before.
- Someone says they'll break up with you if you don't.
- Someone tells you that you have to prove you love them.

**Myth:** He is my husband so it can't be rape.

**Fact:** No matter what your relationship or your role, sexual contact must always be a choice and be consensual.

**Myth:** I must have been asking for it.

**Fact:** The places you go, the clothes you wear or if you had a lot to drink, don't give anyone the right to rape you.

**Myth:** Survivors only say it is rape if they feel guilty about having sex.

**Fact:** There are no more false reports of rape to the police than any other crime. Most rapes go unreported because the rapist is known or even related to the victim, and she's too embarrassed or frightened to report them.

**Myth:** I've had sex with this person before, that means they didn't assault me.

**Fact:** Forced sex is still sexual assault. Consent must be obtained during every sexual encounter, consent from last night does not mean consent for the morning and consent from one day does not make it okay for a different day.

**Myth:** Forgetting details means it mustn't have happened.

**Fact:** The trauma from a sexual assault can affect your memory, and depending on if there was alcohol/drugs in your system it can be hard to remember things surrounding your assault.

# Sexual Violence by Someone You Know

Perpetrators are usually male, and the people they assault are usually female. He is often someone known to women and is someone they know and trust - he could be a friend, someone you work or study with, your boyfriend/girlfriend or someone you go out with. Sometimes it's someone you don't know or have only just met. Even though the majority of rapists are male, it is still possible to be raped by a female. If rape has been perpetrated by a female, it is still rape.

Rapists might:

- Use violence or force.
- Threaten you.
- Make you feel like you've got no choice.
- Make you feel like you owe them sex.
- Tell you that you led them on or teased them.
- Get you drunk or stoned.
- Not take "no" for an answer.
- Talk you into it.
- Take advantage of you if are sleeping or unconscious.
- Emotional blackmail.



Most women are raped or sexually abused by someone they know. It is not your fault. You may find it helpful to speak with someone about your experience.

## IF YOU'VE BEEN RECENTLY RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

You may be feeling:

- Shock or disbelief – "I never thought this could happen to me."
- Fear – "Will the rapist hurt me again?"
- Anger – "How dare they do this to me!"
- Shame – "Did I provoke it in some way?"
- Guilt – "If only I hadn't..."
- Betrayed – "But I trusted them."
- Numb – "I feel so hollow."
- Worried about the future – "Will my life ever be the same?"
- Empty and confused – you may feel you don't know who you are anymore.

You have survived a sexual assault you are a strong, resourceful person who has the right to be treated with respect. You may want to know what your options are in terms of medical, reporting and safety concerns. There is information in this booklet about all of these and if you would like further details on any of these areas then Zig Zag workers can help with this.

## IF YOU WERE SEXUALLY ABUSED AS A CHILD

When you were a child or a teenager, did an adult (or someone older or more powerful than you) use their position of authority or trust to involve you in any sexual activity?

The perpetrator was probably someone you knew and trusted, and was probably male - he could have been your father, stepfather, grandfather, uncle, brother or other trusted adult.

Children are very trusting and have a natural need for affection and approval. Children also have very little power over what happens in their lives - they are taught to obey adults and look to them for guidance.

Sexual Abuse/Assault/Violence:

- Is a misuse of power.
- Is a betrayal of a child's trust and affection.
- Is a denial of a child's right to feel safe and valued.
- Is a violation of a child's personal boundaries and sense of self.

When a person sexually abuses a child, they know what they are doing is wrong – so the survivor is made to keep it a secret. The survivor may be kept silent by being made to feel responsible for what the perpetrator is doing to them, or by making threats about what will happen if anyone finds out about the abuse. The survivor may think that they will be blamed, or that no one will believe them - and adults often don't want to hear when a child tries to tell them, especially if the abuser is a family member or known to the family.

If you were sexually abused as a child, you have lived through a traumatic experience which can have long lasting effects. You are also a strong, resourceful and courageous person who has survived and coped in whatever ways have been available to you.

# Reporting

## MEDICAL/HEALTH INFORMATION

Whether or not you want to report to police, there are many good reasons to see a doctor.

You need to care for your immediate physical needs. You might have been injured in ways that, as yet, you are not aware. When physical violence or force is used, there is an increased chance of bodily fluids being transferred through damaged tissue.

For peace of mind, it can be important to have a check-up and not run the risk of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) or HIV/AIDS being left untreated. Seeing a doctor may ease any fears you might have about STIs or unwanted pregnancy. Knowing what the possibilities are and having a supportive doctor with whom you can discuss prevention or treatment will help you to feel you are regaining control of your life.

If you are thinking about reporting an assault to police you can consider having a medical examination as soon as possible after the assault, (usually up to 72 hours), for the purpose of collecting evidence. (See below under 'Reporting to Police' for more information about this.) If you choose not to have a medical examination immediately after the assault, that is okay. You can still make a complaint to the police and they will follow up other forms of evidence.

Whilst medical evidence collected after an assault does not prove an assault occurred it does prove that a sexual act took place. This can be an important piece of evidence, particularly if the perpetrator is denying that anything happened.



The medical examination can be a difficult experience as it involves a thorough examination of the areas involved in the assault. This can include an internal examination. The doctor will also take samples of your hair and any hair and semen from the perpetrator that may be left on your body. You are entitled to have a support person with you during this examination and you can stop the process at any time.

The counsellors at Zig Zag can let you know about supportive doctors, sexual health clinics and services providing counselling and support regarding pregnancy options.

## LEGAL PROCESS – THE POLICE AND THE COURTS

### IF YOU DECIDE TO REPORT

The decision to report to police can be a big one and it is your decision to make. You can report the abuse days, months or even years after the crime. The following information may help with the decision.

### REPORTING TO POLICE

You can contact your local police to report the sexual violence. They will be able to answer any questions and concerns you have. They will want to take a statement from you that outlines the details of the events leading up to, during, and after the assault. The police will ask you to describe exactly what happened in your own words and ask questions to ensure no details are left out. The information in the statement will be used by the police to investigate and gather evidence.

If it was very recent, they may want to take you to the Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital where you will speak to a sexual assault worker from the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). Doctors and Nurses called Forensic Medical Officers (FMOs), who are specially trained to take evidence for sexual assault cases, conduct these examinations.

After reporting, if the perpetrator pleads not guilty it can be a slow process before the case goes to trial (often between one to two years) and you may need to tell your story a few times to police and in court.

### VICTIM ASSIST QUEENSLAND (VAQ)

Victim Assist is part of the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General and assists eligible victims of crime to recover from the effects of violence by providing some financial assistance. In most cases, to be eligible for financial assistance you need to report the act of violence to the police, but for special primary victims, the act of violence can be reported to the police, a doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, counsellor or dv service. Victim Assist also provides information, support and referral to services that can help you. To find out more or to check your eligibility, phone: 1300 546 587 or email: [VictimAssist@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:VictimAssist@justice.qld.gov.au) or speak to a counsellor a Zig Zag.

### ALTERNATIVE REPORTING OPTIONS

If you do not feel comfortable making an official complaint to the police, you can choose to undertake Alternative Reporting Options (ARO). If you file an ARO, there will not be a court case, however, the information you provide to the police may help empower you in the knowledge that your information could be used to assist in other prosecutions against an offender and to help the police design strategies to target offenders. You can remain anonymous or provide your details and choose whether or not you would like the police to contact you about it. You can still make an official report after filing an ARO.

# The Effects of Sexual Violence

## SELF ESTEEM

Being sexually assaulted may have given you the message that what you wanted or how you felt didn't matter. The perpetrator may have blamed you for their behaviour, or you may have felt responsible, even though you were powerless to stop what was happening.

You may:

- Think that you have no rights.
- Feel like you have no control over your life.
- Believe you're a bad person.

The above thoughts and feelings can be challenged as you do have rights including the right to make decisions and choices in your life. Experiencing sexual violence does not make you a bad person.



## FEELINGS

Sexual violence can produce a range of emotional reactions, including confusion, fear, betrayal, guilt, anger, grief, isolation and hurt. Because these feelings are difficult to deal with, they are often blocked out.

You may:

- Have difficulty identifying or expressing feelings.
- Not trust your feelings.
- Feel like your emotions are out of control.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Sexual violence betrays trust and denies the experience of loving intimacy.

You may:

- Avoid closeness in order to avoid betrayal.
- Become involved with abusive people.
- Think being involved with abusive people is all you should expect.
- Cling to people for the approval you didn't get as a child.
- Put other people's needs first because you feel like you don't deserve to have your needs considered.

## YOUR BODY

The experience of sexual violence produces confusing, frightening and possibly painful bodily sensations in a child. One way that children cope with this is by learning to go numb or by detaching themselves from what is happening physically.

You may:

- Be disconnected from your bodily sensations.
- Feel bad about your body.
- Inflict pain or injury on yourself.
- Abuse alcohol, drugs or food.

## SEXUALITY

A young woman who has been sexually abused has had an adult's sexual knowledge and needs imposed upon her. She has been denied the opportunity to develop and explore her own sexuality. Sexual behaviour becomes linked with powerlessness and confusion. It may also be the only source of affection and approval a child experiences.

You may:

- Go numb during sex.
- Avoid sex.
- Seek sex to meet other emotional needs.
- Be vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

## PARENTING

A young woman who is abused may have no experience of appropriate parenting or healthy family life.

As a parent, you may:

- Find it hard to balance your needs with those of your children.
- Be over protective.
- Find it hard to show affection appropriately.



## What Support Does Zig Zag Offer?

Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre Inc. is an organisation that provides sexual assault support and counselling services to young women aged 12-25 years who have experienced sexual violence at any time in their lives. If a young woman has turned 25 years, Zig Zag will support her to connect to other services if she would like to access further support. The organisation recognises that young women are often more vulnerable to abuse and they face unique issues. Young women are less likely to be believed or supported. They often do not have the resources to access support and services.

Zig Zag is funded to provide support to young women in the areas of sexual violence and homelessness. We offer information, counselling, support, advocacy, referral and opportunities to be involved in support groups and community action. Zig Zag also provides medium term accommodation for young women aged 16-25 years who are experiencing homelessness.

Zig Zag is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm (Tuesdays from 12.30pm). Please feel free to call on (07) 3843 1823. There is also information at [www.zigzag.org.au](http://www.zigzag.org.au).



# Counselling

Zig Zag provides initial contact sessions to explore support needs and ongoing counselling options. Counselling can be short to long term, with regular opportunities to review counselling sessions to determine whether they continue to meet your needs.

If you decide to see a counsellor, phone Zig Zag to make an appointment to ensure a counsellor is available at a time that suits you. If you are unable to make it to an appointment, you are welcome to phone and make another time. Counselling support may also be provided over the phone, by email, by text or various video chat programs.

## WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

- A time for you to tell your story and explore thoughts and feelings when you are ready.
- A safe place where you can be yourself and not be judged or blamed.
- An opportunity to gather information about issues that are important to you.
- Support with decision making and choices.
- A time to explore solutions you haven't tried.
- Support in finding your own answers.
- Support for change and growth when ready.
- A space where you are invited to share, control and discover what works for you.



(KM, 25 YEARS OLD)

## WHAT DOES A COUNSELLOR DO?

- Listens to your story, respects and believes you.
- Provides you with the information about what counselling is so you will know what to expect.
- Provides choices about ways to explore thoughts and feelings including through art, writing, talking, and/or support groups.
- Supports you to achieve some of your goals.
- Helps you find supports in your community.
- Helps to rediscover your own inner strengths.
- Works alongside you to ensure your sessions provide a safe space for you.
- Encourages you to make choices about your life and respects your needs and decisions.
- Builds a relationship with you based on honesty and openness.
- Provides information and choice.
- Provides confidentiality. A counsellor can also talk with you about any limitations to confidentiality.

## TOPICS THAT MIGHT COME UP IN COUNSELLING:

- Memories and feelings about your experience of abuse.
- Anger.
- Relationships.
- Trust.
- Self-esteem.
- Confidence.
- Being assertive.
- Protective behaviours.
- Sexuality.
- Body image.
- Loneliness.
- Fear.
- Many others – all important and valid. It's different for everyone.

## WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS WHEN ENGAGING IN COUNSELLING?

- To be respected.
- Confidentiality.
- Privacy.
- To help direct/control the focus and pace of sessions.
- To have any complaints or feedback listened to and responded to with respect.
- To choose your counsellor.

## EVALUATING THE COUNSELLING

It is important for us to hear from you how you feel about the counselling service we offer. We would appreciate your feedback on what you did/didn't like and what we could have done differently. One way you can give us your feedback is by completing an anonymous questionnaire at different times during your visits or when you decide to finish the counselling process. Another way to give us your feedback is by talking to your counsellor.

## THE FIRST APPOINTMENT

During the first session at Zig Zag we talk generally about goals, expectations and the directions the counselling could take. You will be invited to think about what might help you at this time, and what your hopes for counselling might be. There is no right or wrong way to do this and you will find out what works best for you. There is no need for you to share anything you don't want to.

If you decide to return and begin ongoing sessions, the counsellor will revisit some of what was said in the first session to see if the hopes are still the same.

## Support Groups

Zig Zag also offers support groups, the types of groups offered include therapeutic support groups, information groups and workshop groups.

## WHAT ARE SUPPORT GROUPS?

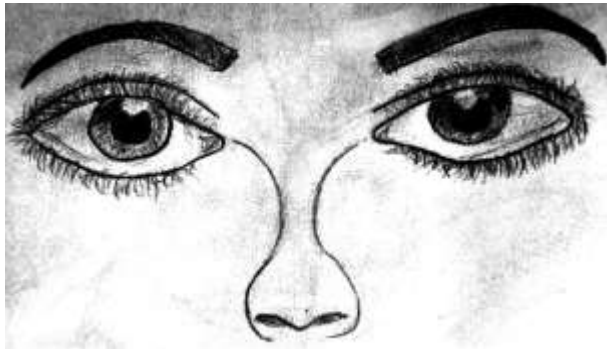
- A time for connection and mutual support with other young women.
- The chance to “break the silence” by sharing your experience of abuse, in a safe setting with the support of the group.
- To share your ways of coping and to hear the ways others have coped.
- The opportunity to understand the impact of abuse by listening to others in the group.
- Support and encouragement from your peers to recognise your strengths and ability to move on from the abuse.
- A place to exchange information about services, things to do and places to go.
- A place that promotes social inclusion and a sense of belonging.
- A place to talk with others about actions that you could do or be involved with that help to reduce sexual violence in our community.

# Technology Based Violence

## IMAGE BASED ABUSE

Image-based abuse is when someone shares, or threatens to share, intimate or sexual photos or videos of a person without that person's consent. 1 in 3 people aged 16–19 (31%) and 1 in 4 people aged 20–29 (27%) were the victim of at least one form of image-based abuse.

(Henry N, Powell A & Flynn A (2017). 'Not just 'revenge pornography': Australians' experiences of image-based abuse. A summary report.'. RMIT University, Melbourne.)



## CYBERBULLYING

Cyber bullying is intentional and repeated cruel or hurtful behaviour that is carried out using technology. It is a crime and if this is a problem for you, you can contact the police or contact the e-safety commissioner on the website below.

## SEXTING

Sexting is the sharing electronically of images, videos, and/or text messages that are sexually explicit in nature.

(Florimbio, A., Bream, M., Grigorian, H., Elmquist, C., Shorey, R., Temple, J., & Stuart, G. (2019). 'An Examination of Sexting, Sexual Violence, and Alcohol Use Among Men Arrested for Domestic Violence. *Archives of Sexual Behaviour*', 48(8), 2381-2387. Doi: 10.1007/s10508-019-1409-6).

Technology-based violence is a really important area to be aware of, and an area that has impacted on many young women. Hurting someone through the use of technology is never okay and it is important that you can get support if this has happened to you. If you want to find out more, there has been lots of work done on developing resources around this issue and a couple of websites that have good information are: -

- [www.thinkyouknow.org.au](http://www.thinkyouknow.org.au); and
- [www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/cyberbullying](http://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/cyberbullying).

## GENDERED CRIME – MALE PERPETRATORS

Based on the 2016 Personal Safety Survey, the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of sexual assault are men. Of female victims who had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, 98% (1.7 million victims) reported a male perpetrator.

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics (November 2017), 'Personal Safety Survey Australia 2016', Cat. no. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra.)*

## GENDERED CRIME – FEMALE SURVIVORS

Findings of a 2016 survey found that since the age of 15 years approximately 1 in 5 women reported experiencing sexual assault, compared with approximately 1 in 20 men. (ibid)

In 2017 in Australia, the majority (82%) of all sexual assault victims recorded by police were female.

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2018), 'Recorded Crime - Victims, Australia, 2017', cat. no. 4510.0. ABS, Canberra.)*

## LGBTIQ+AT HIGH RISK

92% of women who identify as LGBTIQ+ have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.

*(Australian Human Rights Commission, (2018), 'Everyone's business: 4th national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces'. Retrieved from: <https://whiteribbon.org/2Ea7Q6C>)*

*\*LGBTIQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, or Asexual, plus any other terms that people use to describe their gender, sexuality, and physical sex qualities.*

## YOUNG WOMEN A HIGHER RISK

According to figures recorded by police during 2016 of the victims of sexual assault in Australia, 57.1% were females aged between 10-24 years of age when they experienced sexual assault.

*(Australian Institute of Criminology, (September 2017), 'Victims of violent crime by age group and sex'. Retrieved from [http://www.crimstats.aic.gov.au/facts\\_figures/1\\_victims/A4/](http://www.crimstats.aic.gov.au/facts_figures/1_victims/A4/)).*

## RELATIONSHIPS OF SURVIVOR TO PERPETRATOR

In Queensland of those sexual assaults reported to police in 2017:

- 71.9% of victims knew the offender
- 31.6% of offenders were family members.

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics June (2018), Recorded Crime- Victims, Australia, 2017, 'Table 11: VICTIMS Relationship of offender to victim by offence, Selected States and Territories 2010-2017', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. no.*

*45100DO00. Retrieved from*

*<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4510.02017.>*)

## REPORTING TO POLICE

Of those women who experienced sexual assault in the 12 months prior to the 2016 Personal Safety Survey, 87% did not report the incident to police.

*(Australian Bureau of Statistics (Nov 2018), Personal Safety Survey 2016, cat. no. 44906. Retrieved from*

*<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4906.0~2016~Main%20Features~Most%20Recent%20Incident%20of%20Sexual%20Assault%20by%20a%20Male~16>*)

## LOCATION OF OFFENCE

According to police records for 2016:

- Residential locations were the most likely place of occurrence for sexual assault (65.6%).
- Approximately 4% of sexual assault offences were recorded as happening on the street/footpath.

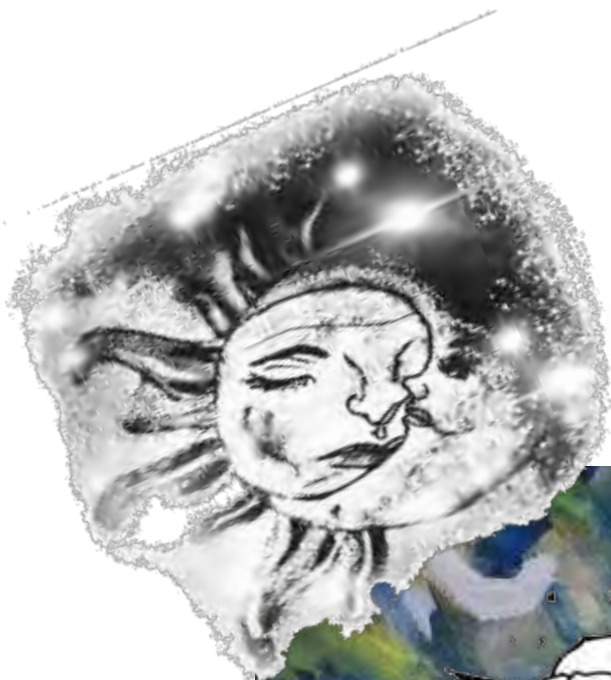
*(Australian Bureau of Statistics (June 2018), Recorded Crime- Victims, Australia, 2017, 'Table 3: VICTIMS Location where offence occurred by selected offences 2010-2017', data cube: Excel spreadsheet, cat. No.45100DO001. Retrieved from*

*<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/4510.02017.>*)



## Other Organisations and Services

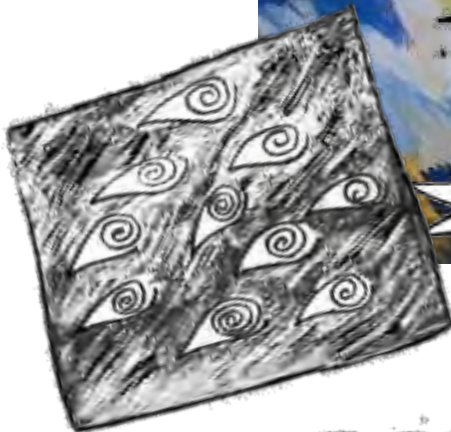
<b>Emergency</b> <i>Police/Ambulance/Fire emergency call service</i>	000
<b>Queensland Sexual Assault Helpline</b> <i>Telephone support and counselling any day from 7:30am-11.30pm</i>	1800 010 120
<b>1800 RESPECT</b> <i>24-hour helpline and online chat services</i>	1800 737 732
<b>Lifeline</b> <i>24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services</i>	13 11 14
<b>Kids Helpline</b> <i>Telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5-25</i>	1800 551 800
<b>DV Connect</b> <i>24-hour domestic violence helpline</i>	1800 811 811
<b>Victim Assist Queensland</b> <i>Support for victims of crime through provision of financial assistance</i>	1300 546 587
<b>Women's Legal Service</b> <i>Free legal advice and information for women in Queensland</i>	1800 957 957
<b>Sexual Assault Response Team (SART)</b> <i>24-hour counselling at the Royal Brisbane &amp; Women's Hospital</i>	3636 5207
<b>Blue Knot Foundation</b> <i>Telephone counselling 9am-5pm on Monday-Sunday</i>	1300 657 380
<b>Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Support Centre (BRISSC)</b> <i>Telephone support 9am-1pm on Monday-Thursday</i>	3391 0004
<b>Immigrant Women's Support Service</b> <i>Counselling and support for immigrant and refugee women</i>	3846 3490
<b>Domestic Violence Action Centre Ipswich</b> <i>Counselling and support for survivors aged 14 years and over</i>	3816 3000
<b>Centre Against Sexual Violence (Logan)</b> <i>Counselling and support for women aged 12 years and over</i>	3808 3299
<b>Murrigunyah Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Corporation</b> <i>Counselling and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women</i>	3290 4254
<b>Sisters Inside</b> <i>Advocacy organisation for women in prison</i>	3844 5066
<b>WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention Association</b> <i>Counselling and support for women with intellectual disabilities</i>	3262 9877
<b>Apps and Websites</b> <i>There are many other online resources and applications that you might find useful. Talk to friends and workers about what they recommend!</i>	



When  
women  
support  
each other  
miraculous things  
happen..



Healing is possible



you are more than what happened  
to you.



(AS, 24 YEARS OLD)