



Seen and Heard: IDD Community

Let's Talk About... Unsupportive Family

Roleplay: Telling a Family Member about a Sexual Assault

Why It's Important

Telling a family member about a sexual assault can be hard, scary, and emotional. Telling can sometimes help the survivor get support. It can sometimes help them not feel alone. But sometimes, a family member is not supportive. The unsupportive person may blame the survivor. They may not believe the survivor. This can harm the survivor all over again.

It is **always** the survivor's choice to tell or not. These role plays will help you practice telling when a family member is and is not supportive.

If you tell and a family member is not supportive, you can still find help. You can tell a trusted adult. You can call or text the [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) at:

- 800.656.HOPE (4673)
- hotline.rainn.org, hotline.rainn.org/es (Spanish)

You can call your local rape crisis center (find it at centers.rainn.org).

Roleplay 1: Supportive Family Member

Survivor: I need to tell you about something that happened to me. I'm scared to tell you because it's bad.

Family: I love you. I am here for you. You can trust me.

Survivor: A person touched me in a sexual way. I did not want it. But they did it anyway.

Family: I believe you. I'm sorry that happened to you. Do you want me to help you report it?

Survivor: I don't know. I'm still scared.

Family: That's OK. I'm here to help. When you are ready we will work through this together.

Survivor: Thank you.



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Roleplay 2: Unsupportive Family Member

Survivor: I need to tell you about something that happened to me. I'm scared to tell you because it's bad.

Family: What happened?

Survivor: A person touched me in a sexual way. I did not want it. But they did it anyway.

Family: I'm sure that's not true. You must be making that up.

Survivor: It did happen. And it harmed me.

Family: You must have made them think you wanted it.

Survivor: No. This person harmed me. And you are harming me when you don't believe me or help me. I will find someone else to support me. It is your loss that you won't have a relationship with me.



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Caution

Many people with IDD are sexual assault survivors. Some people don't want others to know. Some do. Some don't realize they are survivors until they start talking about it. Some survivors are triggered when they talk about sexuality and sexual assault. They relive their trauma. This can be very painful. It can happen unexpectedly.

Talking honestly about sexuality and sexual assault is important. It's also important to keep everyone safe and supported. Use these guidelines when you talk about sexuality and sexual assault.

Plan Ahead

- Read these guidelines. Share them with people who will join the roleplay.
- Have a safe space ready. That could be a Zoom breakout room. It could be a room or outside space where you are talking. Let people know where it is. Tell them they can use it whenever they need. They do not need to ask for permission.

Watch for Triggers

- Watch faces and bodies. You might see signs of anger, fear, or sadness.
- A person might start fidgeting. They might get up and try to leave. They might rock or hug their arms to themselves.
- Sometimes, you can't tell at all from the outside.

Give Support

- You might see someone struggling. Ask if they need a break.
- Someone might share something personal or upsetting. Use words of comfort and support:

"I believe you."

"You are brave to share this."

"It is not your fault."

"I care about you."

"I'm sorry this happened to you."

"I am here to help."

Follow Up

- Check in after the roleplay. Check in more than once.
- Share good resources like:
 - National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800.656.HOPE (4673), hotline.rainn.org, hotline.rainn.org/es (Spanish)
 - Your local rape crisis center (find it at centers.rainn.org)
 - Some self-care activities (find some at rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma)



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