

10 True Things You Can Say to a Survivor

- 1) Sexual abuse or assault is NEVER a survivor's fault.
- 2) Even if you did something you should not have done (like drinking or going someplace you weren't supposed to go to) that NEVER justifies sexual abuse or assault.
- 3) When people go through an overwhelming scary experience, they sometimes just freeze and literally can't move or do anything. This is called "tonic immobility" and it is a biological reaction. If this happened to you, it does not mean you are weak or that you wanted to be victimized.
- 4) People who sexually abuse or assault children/teens often do sneaky things to gain a victim's trust. This is called "grooming." They make their victims feel special and then they take advantage of them.
- 5) You may feel there is something wrong with you, that you are dirty or disgusting because of what happened to you. That is not true. Even if you had some sexual feelings during the abuse, that was a just a normal body reaction, and doesn't mean you wanted it to happen.
- 6) People who abuse or assault children or teens don't usually use weapons like knives or guns. They use their power over the victim, fear and threats, seduction (convincing someone), ridicule, blame, secrecy, and shame. Because it is usually someone you know, they can figure out how to manipulate you.
- 7) No matter what has happened to you before or what someone has done to you, you always have the right to make a choice about sexual activity- every time and with every partner.
- 8) Survivors of sexual abuse and assault can go on to have healthy, loving relationships with people who respect and care about them. If someone you are seeing makes you feel bad about yourself because of what happened, that person is not worthy of a relationships with you.
- 9) Look around, one out of every four women and one in twenty-six men have been sexually abused in their lifetime. You can't which ones. It can happen to anyone. What happened to you cannot be taken away, but it is just a little part of who you are. You are a unique individual and you are a survivor.
- 10) You are not alone. I believe you and I am here with you.

TIPS TO REMEMBER

--This is your friend or family member, even though this happened to them, they are still your friend. Help them remember all of the other amazing parts of themselves.

-- Listen more than you talk. Ask questions what how they are feeling, what they are thinking about. Provide a safe non-judgmental space.

-- Focus on their strengths. Survivors are not broken, just wounded. But healing is a process that creates real strength.