



Responding to Disclosures of Personal Trauma

Sensitive Responses:

"I'm sorry you were hurt in that way."

"What happened was not your fault."

"You are not to blame for what happened to you."

"Thank you for trusting me with such personal and private experience."

"You deserve help in dealing with something so difficult. Would you like me to connect you with someone you could talk to about this?"

Suggestions for Avoiding Retraumatization

Avoid positioning yourself between the person and the exit door.

Ask what you can do to make the interview process more comfortable.

Ask permission if you touch the person.

Use grounding techniques if the person seems to be disconnected or in distress.

Examples include:

- calmly remind the person where they are, that they are safe, and that the abuse is not currently happening
- ask the person to redirect her attention to the environment and to describe what she sees in detail
- ask the person to stomp her feet and push her body into the chair

Restore a sense of control to the person by providing her/him with as much choice as possible.

Adapted from: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Within a Primary Care Setting: Effectively and Sensitive Responding to Sexual Trauma Survivors, Wisconsin Medical Journal.