



Supporting Our Sisters: Conversation Starter

Zeta Tau Alpha created a digital poster focused on supporting our sisters who are survivors of sexual assault. Use this conversation starter to have continued dialogue within the chapter on steps to take, things to say and how to be the most supportive sister you can be when speaking to a survivor of sexual assault.

What do you need to know?

- Remember it takes tremendous courage for the survivor to tell you what happened.
- Understand the way it happened might be different than what you imagine.
- Keep in mind people respond to being assaulted or abused in various ways.
- Be patient. A survivor might feel and behave in very different ways at different times.
- It is not your role to judge how she “should” be acting or feeling.

How can you provide support?

Support looks different to each sister, but could include some of the following:

- Sit with her as she tells her story.
- Go with her to an appointment with a medical or mental health professional.
- Reassure her that she is not to blame for this experience and follow up with her in the weeks and months after.
- Let her know she has a support system of people who love her and believe her.

What supportive things can you say?

A big step in becoming a supportive sister is learning what to say when speaking with a survivor of sexual assault. Here are some things you can say:

- I believe you.
- I’m sorry this happened to you.
- It wasn’t your fault.
- It took courage and trust for you to share this experience with me.
- Thank you for telling me.
- You survived; obviously you did the right things.
- I’m always here if you want to talk.
- Can I do anything for you?
- I can only imagine how you are feeling.

What should you avoid saying?

Being supportive often makes people anxious because they're afraid they will say the wrong thing. Here are some tips on things to avoid:

- Do not ask questions about her behavior. That can easily sound like blaming her for the other person's violating actions.
- Do not pressure her about what she should or should not do in terms of reporting.
- Try to avoid asking questions. Questions about how it occurred or about why she did or did not do something differently can easily sound like skepticism, which can be very hurtful.

What are the next steps?

- Follow up with her on a regular basis.
- Consider talking with a professional yourself so you have guidance while working through your own emotions and know how to be a more supportive friend and sister.
- Download the Social Essentials eBook (information below).

ZTA's Social Essentials eBook

Greater knowledge gives you greater power. This downloadable resource is designed to equip you with the knowledge that can help you optimize your social life and personal relationships in college and beyond. In addition to navigating the waters of your own life, you have a powerful role to play in the lives of those around you.

Download now by logging onto the **Sisters Only Site** and clicking the **Z-Learning** tab.