



**I AM HERE**

*Whisper for now*

*I hear your whisper*

**I SEE YOU...**

*Let me be here*

**FOR YOU...**

For you - those who are willing to step-in,  
remember...

We are privileged, honoured and we should feel humbled.

To be able to share a space with someone who carries deep,  
internalized wounds which only show on their hearts.

It is not visible for us to see...

Know for sure it takes great courage for that person to trust  
us to allow themselves to share what is tearing at their soul,  
what is consuming most of their thoughts, what is whirling  
around in their minds as they try to process this journey  
they have been put on. This mountain they must climb, this  
invisible yet giant presence that consumes their minds and  
souls.

# *Rippling Waters...*

Keeping things bottled up is like water rising & rising inside of you. Until at some point it's going to spill over into overflow where it becomes flood waters, threatening to drown you.



# **SPEAK**



Allow them to say... to say everything...

Keeping things bottled up inside is never the answer, because it is so unhealthy, yet a person will not speak for fear of...

Fear of judgement - We can be so quick to respond, even if our intent is well meant. Sometimes saying too much is just that, too much.

Fear of reality - Sometimes saying it out loud does make it real and we fear addressing that.

Fear of repercussions - Sometimes we have stayed silent for a reason, because of some type of consequence placed on us or even our thoughts on a perceived outcome.

Due to the shame or self-blame that encompasses the situation. When we have constant negative self-talk that does not serve us well yet can sometimes be our only talk, our listening ears will pick up all of that and will pass it on to our subconscious.

*I Believe You...*

*Why Wouldn't We Believe...*

What are we really saying? Do we need to say that?

Are we not reiterating the core messaging of the rape culture? Are we not undermining the essence of a person's integrity, should we not become silent, present and look at that person and really hear what they are saying? Step into the suffering with silence and allow them to speak freely.

I know if someone would of said to me "I believe you"  
It would have stopped me in my tracks and my mind  
would have started running and I would have thought  
"WHY WOULDN'T YOU" believe me. It would of shut me  
down, emotionally and then my story becomes about you  
having to reiterate with me you believe...



When someone speaks of being diagnosed with a terminal illness, or their house has been broken into, or their vehicle stolen... Do we say “I BELIEVE YOU”... no we right away step in and we listen, we listen with empathy...

We need to do that with “Rape Victims” we need to quietly step into that suffering...

In one particular disclosure I know a victim had been told... 95% of women lie, but I believe you...



**In that moment everything changed,  
she instantly shut down.**

# Trauma & Trauma Informed

Trauma-Informed Practise is a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma. It emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone, and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

## Check List: Key Principles of Trauma Informed

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice

## Key Elements of Trauma

- It was unexpected
- The person was unprepared
- There was nothing a person could do to stop it from happening

Learn whatever you can about being trauma-informed. It really helps to make sense of the victims reactions, coping mechanisms, vicarious trauma and what impacts certain triggers.







# **What do we say...**

## **What does that look like?**

We need to learn to step into suffering...

Which means, are we willing to sit in silence, are we willing to really listen, not to respond but to hear...

- Remain calm. You may feel shocked or outraged, but expressing these emotions to the victim may cause confusion or discomfort.
- Give the victim control. Control was taken away during the assault. Empower the victim to make decisions about what steps to take next, and try to avoid telling her or him what to do.
- Be available for the victim to express a range of feelings: crying, screaming, being silent, etc.

Remember, the victim is angry with the person who assaulted her or him and the situation, not with you. Just be there to listen.

- Avoid making threats against the suspect. Threats of harm may only cause the victim to worry about your safety and risk of arrest.
- Maintain confidentiality. Let the victim decide who to tell about the assault.
- Encourage counselling. Give the victim the hotline number for the nearest rape crisis centre, but let the victim decide whether or not to call.
- Re-establish the victim's sense of security, safety, and control.
- Say what you can guarantee. Don't make promises you can't keep, such as saying the victim will never be hurt again, or that the offender will be put in jail.
- Be patient and recognize that healing can take years with advances and setbacks.
- Take care of yourself as well.

# Some of the Common Acute Responses to the Trauma:

**DENIAL:** I'm okay. It wasn't anything. I overreacted. This can also be expressed as a desire to "put this behind me" "move on" or "get over this."

**My Response:** This piece is important, as I always believed people have suffered so much more than me and I would minimize the rape. I would also feel I wasn't important enough to people for them to actually want to hear my story. The Rape Culture itself can also minimize the incident and undermine the effects.

**SHOCK, OVERWHELMED / DISCOURAGED, FRIGHTENED, FEARFUL OF SEEING DEFENDANT:**

**My Response:** The shock was numbing, it took a long time to really process things and my thoughts at times were unorganized. I was scared of seeing this person again, and retaliation was huge for me due to the threats he had spoken, but I believe this is relevant for so many.

**FEELING VULNERABLE:**

**My Response:** This never really goes away. The very fact you have experienced this tells you we are not in a safe world and terrible things happen.

## GUILT / SHAME:

**My Response:** Shame was huge. I picked up the onus of shame and I believe it is the nature of the crime and how invasive it is that brings such overwhelming shame.

## WHY ME?:

**My Response:** I could really personalize the event - is there a reason he picked me? What did I do? How did I behave? I took on the blame, asking myself what if I had done things differently?

## SENSE OF LOSS AND SUBSEQUENT GRIEVING:

**My Response:** This sense of loss and grieving ended up so impactful because there was so much to grieve. I had lost me, my independence, confidence and friends. But I was so fortunate to have family, I was blessed with parents who had a deep understanding and they allowed me to process things. They just stepped in and were there to support me.

## ALTERED PERCEPTION AND LOSS OF CONTROL:

**My Response:** It is hard to understand what this can look like.

## ALTERED PERCEPTION:

What does that mean? For me it was a sense of despair, I believed everything, every situation could end in tragedy. If I went for a drive I believed we would end up in the ditch, if a train was to pass by, I would think it could derail. I believed I was not safe anywhere. If out in public I would look at any man and ask myself “is he capable of hurting me?” Nothing or no one felt safe anymore... I think it was due to the very fact I was raped, which in a persons mind it is really hard to comprehend something like that happening. My sense of reality changed I was no longer naive, I had experienced it... I knew then anything was possible and I could be affected by so many tragedies.

## CONTROL:

To this day I cannot feel out of control of my surroundings. I need to be able to leave a situation at any given time, I need to shut down any situation if needed. I have a difficult time flying because I am not in control, I cannot get off that plane at any given moment, so it can feel threatening to me.

When we think of a victim or someone else who is going through something very traumatic, we need to be cognizant of our own behaviours and biases, We do not need to fix a person, we need to allow a person to process the situation and allow them the time to heal as they recognize the trauma or the triggers that can set them back.

We need to help them sort through the shock, their own questions as to what and how? While they are processing things in their own heads, they are already starting to question themselves, how could this have been different, they start to self blame, and instantly pick up the shame.

And if they are in the court process, they especially need reassurance to not take on the onus of blame... because the courts will do that, the court process itself is so invasive and damaging because a victim is a witness for their own trial. And they are left to defend themselves and their integrity to be able to have the courts prove beyond a reasonable doubt that they were assaulted.



Then, there is the physical aspect to a crime such as rape, have they contracted a disease and is that being addressed through medical care? Are they pregnant?

We are more advanced in the care of a victim if they were in fact taken to a hospital for an exam. Certain concerns are addressed at that time, thankfully, but what if the victim is not in the legal system, what if they could not report? How do we work through all that with them. These are things that have to be addressed and they need incredible support to navigate all that. Again a quiet helping hand to hold is so important.

When they are ready to tell us something or willing to open their heart, that is so guarded, we need to listen and validate. We need to reassure them it is normal to be experiencing the effects the way they are.



I remember an overwhelming emotion that became unbearable at the time, I felt dirty, so dirty nothing could help me feel clean and pure, until I found the courage to tell someone. I got brave enough to tell my sister (who was a nurse) I told her in a moment of such mental distress I said to her “I feel dirty” and all she said to me was “you will and that’s okay” her response to me had such a huge impact on me, it was that simple but was huge validation to let me know, “hey its okay what you are feeling is normal and it will be okay. Once I could recognize this emotion was just that a normal reaction to an abnormal situation, I knew I would be okay. They say you cannot change something if you don’t acknowledge it and allow it to surface, which is so true. Once I spoke it, I could learn to accept the emotion and to tell myself it was just that. When that feeling would arise, I could recognize it and I could put it in its rightful place and know I was okay.

It can be a slow process, but with the right support and understanding, they can grow to be healthy and well again.

Court...

- Crown brings the evidence...
- Defense brings the questions...
- Judge seeks judgement...

In criminal cases the burden of proving the defendants guilt is on the prosecution, and they must establish the fact beyond a reasonable doubt.

Victim's role - reporting the crime, testifying and presenting a victim impact statement

The roles of victims are supported by rights to information, participation, protection and to seek restitution.

Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime

[Https://www.victimfirst.gc.ca](https://www.victimfirst.gc.ca)

Roles of people in court - <https://justice.gc.ca>

Court can be the very place where a victim picks up the onus of SHAME, the very fact they are only a witness in their own trials open the floor for undermining questioning and shaming.



"Never ever said I was more than coping, never ever said I wasn't broken, but I can manage to get better and live a very productive life. I will just remember, and at times I will not even realize I'm remembering but my body or emotions will tell me something is off. When we are gentle with ourselves we can learn to know we are okay, that we are not alone with some our reactions or our thoughts." And when we have those who step-in and our willing to sit beside us in our sufferings, holding our hands or gently stepping along side of us, we will be okay...

*There are no words as powerful as a gentle touch to say I hear you.*

*Author: Karen Kuntz*