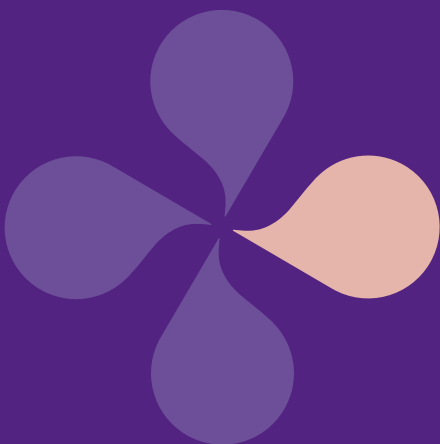


Survivors of Recent Sexual Abuse

Helping you to heal the hurt
and reclaim your life following
sexual assault



helpauckland.org.nz

HELP

Preventing sexual abuse.
Supporting survivors.

We're so sorry that this has happened to you. It's good that you've told someone, and we're here to support you

As an adult survivor of recent sexual abuse or assault, you may be experiencing a range of feelings and symptoms that can seem pretty overwhelming, or be feeling numb and full of questions and disbelief. Either way, you might still be in shock from the trauma of what's happened.

Following an assault, it's common to try to forget about it or get on with 'normal' life as much as possible as a way of escaping the trauma. Seeking support may seem hard, especially if you're trying to hold yourself together. But you don't have to cope on your own. At any time, you can contact our Crisis Counsellor to discuss what happened and get support.

We are constantly striving to best meet the needs of our diverse communities. If you have any cultural or other needs related to disability, religion, gender or sexual identity, please let us know.

No matter what has happened, we're not here to judge or blame.

We're here to help.

Common feelings

You might experience the following feelings after sexual assault or abuse...

- You may feel numb and unable to cry, or you might be overwhelmed and tearful
- You may have moods that go up and down, without really knowing why
- Embarrassment or shame are common responses, especially if you wrongly assume that this was somehow your fault
- You may blame yourself or feel guilty
- Low self-esteem is also common - you may find it hard to like or respect yourself
- It's common to feel resentful, angry or at the 'end of your rope' with less tolerance to stress
- You might have a lack of appetite or want to turn to comfort eating
- Some people suffer from flashbacks or nightmares and have trouble sleeping, or want to sleep all the time
- You might be stuck trying to work out the meaning of something that makes no sense, constantly questioning why and how this happened
- It can be difficult to concentrate or focus on other things
- Mistrust of others or anxiety and a feeling of being unsafe, are common feelings

It's important to understand that these emotional responses are all normal ways of trying to cope - there's no right or wrong way to deal with the trauma of sexual assault or abuse.



Remember, you are not what happened to you, you are more than a survivor, things will get better and you are believed.

LAURA, SURVIVOR

You're not going crazy

Even if it seems like a whole lot of crazy physical and emotional things are happening to you all at once, please be assured – you're not going crazy! What you're feeling is a completely understandable response to the trauma that you've been through.

You don't have to deal with any of the after-effects alone. Intense feelings can lead some people to withdraw from others. Even if you don't want to talk about it (nor should you have to), it's important to reach out for the help you need. Support can help you to avoid depression or the consequences of trying to numb the pain through using drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, or anything else that alters the way you feel.

When you're ready, we have trained and qualified professionals who can help you on your journey towards healing.

If you need to talk, we're here.

Self care in the 'here and now'

Right now, you're probably concerned with getting back to feeling a bit more normal and dealing with any overwhelming feelings. Here are a couple of helpful strategies that you can use immediately, focused around the art of slowing down.

Breathing

Taking deep, slow breaths, from your abdomen and diaphragm, will help reduce your stress levels and counter anxiety, which may be making your symptoms worse.

Grounding

During a flashback or when you're battling intrusive thoughts, it can help to stay present, right in the here and now. Notice where you are and what's around you. Focusing on your surroundings will take you out of your head for a moment.

Calming self-talk

Remind yourself that the traumatic event is not happening right now, that you're safe in this moment. If this is not the case, consider how you could get yourself to a place where you feel safe.

Talking to someone

Counselling may be an option for you, and everything discussed is confidential (and not linked with any police process). Talking with a counsellor is a way of caring for yourself and helping you begin to heal. You're always in control of what happens.

Research shows that people who engage in counselling feel more supported in their healing journey, and are less likely to suffer physical and mental health problems later on. It can help you feel better able to cope, and empower you to make decisions and move forward.

We're here anytime, so whenever you need to talk, call 0800 623 1700.

There may come a time when you feel things are a bit better, and you're ready to **talk to someone** about your experience.

You may not want to share details of what happened, but **talk about how it has made you feel** and the way it has affected your life.

HELP is here if you need us

24/7 HELP



0800 623 1700



Text 8236



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