

# Receiving gender-based and sexual violence disclosures

Gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) can happen anywhere in our community, and we are all responsible to support those who experience it. Many people are not sure what to say or do when someone discloses GBSV. You do not need to be an expert to provide helpful appropriate support. If someone has disclosed to you, this indicates that they feel like they can trust you for support.



Safety is always the first priority when any form of violence has occurred. Ask the person if they are currently safe. If they are not, contact NAIT Protective Services for guidance in supporting their safety.

Here are ways to be supportive when receiving a disclosure of GBSV:




Do	Don't
Be aware of physical space and their comfort. Check in if they seem uncomfortable and adjust space accordingly.	Answer your phone, check your e-mails, look at your smart watch, etc.
Be comfortable with silence. Give them time to think and decide what they want to say.	Talk too much or try to fill pauses.
Tell them you believe them and that it's not their fault.	Ask questions about what happened. Your role is connecting with support, not investigating.
Let them know that they can get support even if they don't file a complaint.	Pressure them to report the incident(s).
Be aware of your voice – are you conveying calm and understanding or stress and panic?	Judge their behaviour prior to, during, or after the incident(s).
Acknowledge that it is a difficult conversation.	
Take their lead on how much eye contact they are comfortable with.	
Provide information on complaint pathways at NAIT (Student Resolution or Human Resources) and external options (Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton or law enforcement).	
Keep in mind that violence and abuse impacts people emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually, and relationally.	

## Self-care after receiving a disclosure

Disclosures of gender-based and sexual violence can be difficult, emotional, and sometimes even traumatic to those who receive them. An important part of how we respond to GBSV is how we take care of ourselves after the disclosure.

Here are some tips for self-care after receiving a disclosure:

- Be kind and compassionate to yourself. Don't worry about whether you handled it perfectly – you did the best you could in that situation.
- Focus on meeting both your physical needs (e.g., food, water, sleep) and your social needs (e.g., time with people who care for you) and carrying that self-compassion through this time. It is common for the person receiving a disclosure to undergo a stress response so you may find yourself extra tired, hungry, angry, or sad over the course of the first few days.
- Reach out for help. While you do have to protect the confidentiality of the situation, you may also need additional support. This could include:
  - Talking with your leader about the disclosure and how they can support you.
  - Debriefing with the Student Resolution Office or Human Resources about the situation, your response and your needs.
  - Working with a counsellor, such as those provided by [LifeWorks \(Employee Family Assistance Program\)](#).
  - Contacting the [Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton's](#) Support and Information Line for supporter help and resources (780.423.4121).
- Consider grounding or mindfulness strategies, which can be very helpful in the moment and after receiving a disclosure. For example, [Dropping Anchor Russ Harris Infographic \(leedsth.nhs.uk\).pdf](#).



It is important to take care of yourself. Prioritize self-care after receiving a disclosure.