

After the sexual violence (sexual assault), we want to protect ourselves.

In order to protect ourselves and not be subjected to the violence again, we might want to make sense of what has happened and to take control of it. For this, we might believe that we can prevent the violence if we take all the responsibility of what we have been subjected to. However, this approach would make us, the survivors, feel guilty.



**No matter how sexual violence occurs, it is not our fault! Violence is the fault of perpetrator only.**



What is important is to know that we are not alone, and we can seek help; to be aware of the presence of individuals / living beings that can support us without judgement and criticism.

The support circle is with me, around me... I do not have to carry the burden all by myself. It is possible for me to reach out and ask for support. Because, after sexual violence, it is possible to heal!



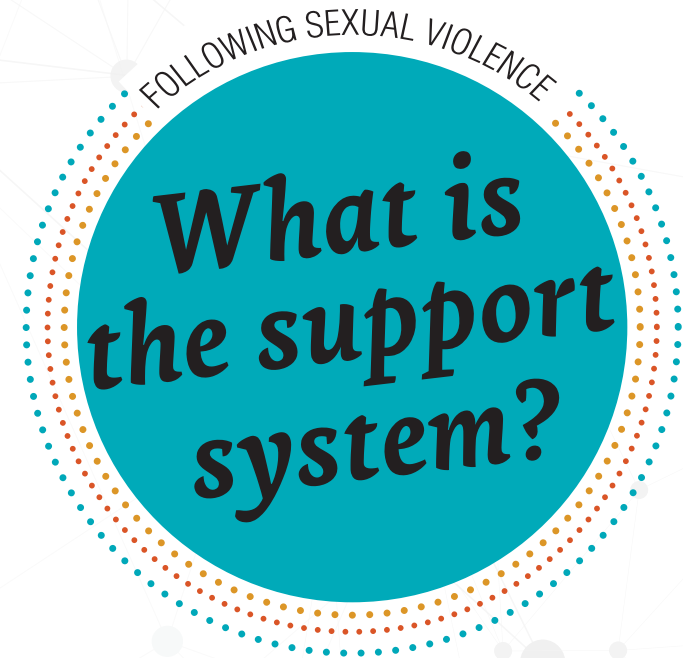
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Self-help information  
for survivors



## WHAT COMES TO OUR MIND FIRST WITH REGARD TO THE SUPPORT SYSTEM?

We may think of the experts such as doctors, lawyers or psychologists, or we may think of the trusted ones, our relatives. Yes, all of these and more can make up our support system. The support system is our network of individuals who support us psychologically via concrete actions. We all have our own support systems in some way. Even being aware of the existence of that system can be empowering for us!



The process we experience after abuse/rape or childhood sexual abuse is our way of surviving and healing/recovery after the violence. This can be a fluctuating process with the ups as well as the downs. We can experience dealing with intense emotions. When we feel lonely or helpless, knowing that there are persons who can provide us with emotional support and that we can seek help contributes to our well-being and empowerment.



Sometimes they may be a family member, my partner, someone from my workplace or my teacher, an animal I love, someone I share the same opinions with, a friend from the course I attend or someone from my social circle...

They may be professionals providing me support. I might draw strength from the life of story of celebrities whom I have never met but whose power to cope with difficulties I admire. Yet, most importantly, my support system consists of individuals that I choose because I know best what kind of support will be good for me.

**Violence never defines who we are. We are whole just as we are, with all our experiences.**

## HOW CAN I BUILD MY SUPPORT SYSTEM?

**I can start with asking myself the following questions:**

Whom do I apply when I want support and assistance in my life?

Around whom do I feel comfortable?

Who loves, respects and trusts me in the way I love, respect and trust them?

Who helps me freely express my feelings by lending an ear without judging, despising, mocking or criticizing?

Who are providing me with advice or suggestions only if I want and solicit these from them?

Who provides me with advice or suggestions only if I want from them and require?



**It is possible for those in my support circle to help me in various ways with their different characteristics and qualities.**

Spending time with an animal and in nature can make us feel calm and peaceful.

Someone's advice can be very good for us.

Another person can accompany us in social environments or anywhere we want to go.

Someone can just carefully listen to us which is perhaps all we need at the moment.

It is possible for those in our lives to support us with their different characteristics and qualities. It may not be sound to try to get all the support we need from the same person. This can be challenging for that person as well.

We can diversify our support system and we can remind ourselves: "There are people in my life who love and support me, and there are experts as a safe pair of hands."

