



the blue bench

COMPASSIONATE CONVERSATIONS HOW TO RESPOND WHEN SOMEONE DISCLOSES SEXUAL ASSAULT: RESOURCE GUIDE

WHO CAN HELP?

- The Blue Bench Hotline (English and Spanish) 303-322-7273
- The Blue Bench's Resource Line 303-329-9922
 - Our Resource Line can connect you with more information about our individual or group therapy services or our *Someone I Love Workshop*
- Colorado State Child Abuse Hotline 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (264-5437)
- Safe2Tell 1-877-542-7233
- Colorado Crisis Counselors 24/7 at 1-844-493-TALK (8255)
- Suicide Hotline (988)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

If it is an emergency, call 911. They can ensure the immediate safety of a child and get medical attention if needed. If it is not an emergency, call 844-CO-4-KIDS. Report to the law enforcement agency in the county in which the abuse took place.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Uniting in Action – Developed in collaboration with high school students, educators, and this workshop empowers high schoolers in their role in shaping community responses to sexual violence.

Let's Talk About It – This middle school program focuses on healthy relationships, boundaries, and skill-building to become an active bystander for middle school youth.

Safe Bars– Workshop for preventing or reducing sexual violence in alcohol serving establishments

SHIELD (Sexual Harassment Intervention Education and Leadership Development) – Partnering with local businesses/corporations to offer workplace harassment training

Knowledge is Power– An overview of the problem of sexual violence and techniques that bystanders can use to keep their communities safer

Youth Empowerment and Safety– A program for parents and youth-serving professionals to learn how to identify and prevent sexual violence against young people.

Email communityed@thebluebench.org to learn more or to schedule a program.

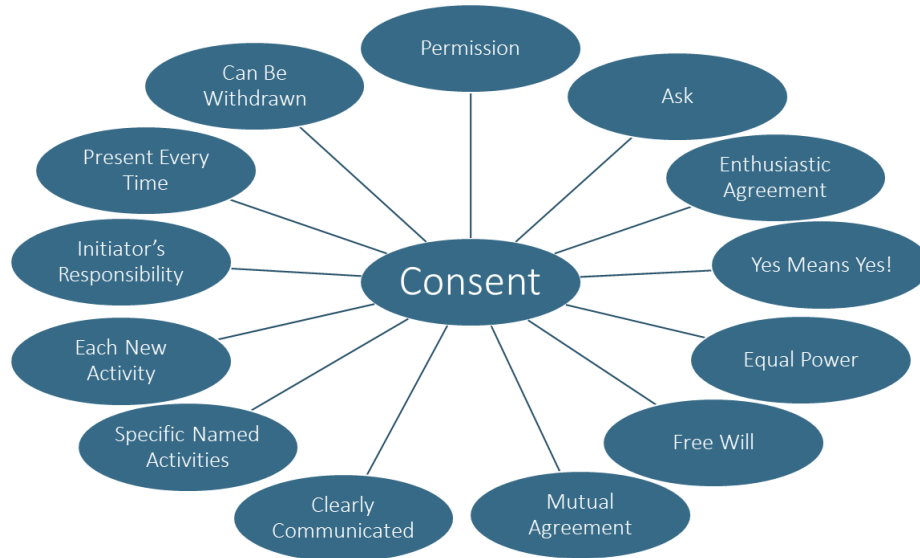
Ending sexual assault through prevention & care

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CONSENT



Consent is **NOT** Possible

- When force, manipulation, coercion, or pressure is present
- When someone is incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol
- When someone is asleep or unconscious
- When someone has an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD) which renders them unable to judge what is being asked of them
- Outside the legal ages of consent

WHAT TO SAY IF SOMEONE DISCLOSES AN EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: THE THREE E'S

Empathize

Listen without judgement; validate feelings; be physically and emotionally available; and be patient.

Examples:

- "I'm so sorry this happened to you. You didn't deserve this, and it's not your fault. Thank you for trusting me with this—I believe you."
- "I can imagine how painful this must be, but you're not alone. I'm here for you, and I'll support you in whatever way you need"
- "How can I help? I can just listen, help you find resources, or simply sit with you. Take your time—I'm not going anywhere."



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Empower

Remind them of their strengths and coping abilities; let them lead the way in ways to help; respect their needs for distance, privacy, and boundaries; ask permission to touch them or to ask questions about the event or their experience; maintain confidentiality and do not share their story without their consent; and respect their autonomy

Examples:

- "You are incredibly strong for sharing this with me. I want you to know that you are in control of what happens next. However you choose to move forward, I will support you."
- "You've survived something incredibly difficult, and that speaks to your resilience. I trust you to know what's best for you, and I'm here to support you in whatever way feels right for you."

*You should not promise confidentiality to a minor who discloses an experience of sexual violence to you.

Educate

Educate yourself; Apply what you know to normalize their symptoms and emotions; and help problem solve if asked.

- "You are not responsible for what happened — only the person who hurt you is. Consent must be freely given, and if you were scared, pressured, or unable to say no, that still means there was no consent. You didn't do anything wrong."
- "Many people experience a freeze response during trauma — it's the brain's way of trying to protect you. Not fighting back doesn't mean you allowed or wanted what happened. Your body reacted in a way that helped you survive."
- "It's common to question what happened, but the truth is, if someone ignored your boundaries, they were in the wrong, not you."

When in doubt, if someone discloses to you that they have experienced sexual violence, say these three things:

1. **"I believe you"** so they know they are not doubted, their experience is valid, and they feel safe. It combats the guilt and shame that comes from a society that often blames and doubts victims of sexual violence.
2. Tell them **"It's not your fault"** to help them let go self-blame and remind them the responsibility is only on the perpetrator.
3. Ask **"How can I help"** to empower them, while maintaining their autonomy and reassuring them you will be there for them.