



LEARN. ACT. CHANGE.



What you say matters.

Every day, your words send a message about what you value and believe. When you stand up for survivors, you send a powerful message that you believe and support them.

Lots of different things shape our beliefs about sexual abuse, assault, and harassment.

- TV shows, movies, news reporting, and other forms of media might inform your views. Recognizing that media portrayals may be inaccurate and rarely tell the whole story is important.
- Think about where you've seen sexual violence shown or talked about. How could that have impacted your views or led to assumptions?

Your words affect others.

- Whether you know it or not, each of us knows people who are survivors of sexual violence. They might not have told anyone out of fear of being blamed or judged or not told you because they were not comfortable or didn't think you would take it seriously.
- If someone in your life is considering sharing something personal with you, they are listening to your opinions or attitudes for clues on how you will respond.

- A comment or joke based on assumptions or stereotypes might not seem like a big deal, but it could make someone feel unsafe about sharing personal or difficult things with you. This is also true for the things you like or share on social media – they can be signs to others about the attitudes and beliefs you have about sexual abuse, harassment, or assault.

For example, someone might think: “I could never tell her what happened to me. She makes comments online saying if victims of sexual assault don’t go to the police, then it wasn’t that serious.”

What can you do?

- Don’t wait for a critical moment to say the right things. The things you do and say every day are telling people your values.
- When you hear comments that blame victims or make light of sexual abuse, assault, and harassment, speak up so others know you disagree. Even if you don’t have a perfect response, challenging misconceptions and stereotypes sends the message that you believe survivors and you are a safe person to talk to.

For example: “That commercial made me uncomfortable. I think everyone should be treated with respect.” or “I don’t think that’s true — I believe people when they say that someone has hurt them.”

Your voice is powerful and necessary in changing attitudes and educating about sexual abuse, assault, and harassment. People listen to the things you do and speak. Your words and actions can tell people that you are safe to talk to and that you support and believe survivors.