

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Anyone can become a victim of sexual violence, and it can occur anywhere. A victim may be a woman, man, elderly person, adolescent or child. The perpetrator may be someone the victim knows or a complete stranger.

Sexual violence may also occur in relationships where people normally trust each other, such as when dating, being in a marriage, belonging to the same family or working together. The perpetrator, not the victim, is always responsible for what has happened.

Sexual violence seriously violates the physical and personal integrity of the victim. The perpetrator is not motivated by strong sexual needs. Rather, sexual crimes are based on hatred, coercion and abuse of power.



**FREE CRISIS HELPLINE**

**0800 97899**

MON-THU 9 AM-3 PM

SAT-SUN 3-9 PM

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND THEIR EVES 3-9 PM



**FREE LEGAL HELPLINE**

**0800 97895**

MON-THU 11 AM-4 PM

[WWW.TUKINAINEN.FI](http://WWW.TUKINAINEN.FI)



**WHEN SOMEONE CLOSE TO  
YOU HAS EXPERIENCED  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

## PRACTICAL HELP AND SUPPORT

Do not leave the victim alone. Be present and ensure that there is always someone whom the victim trusts nearby. Sexual violence may influence all aspects of the victim's ability to function in daily life. The victim may need assistance with handling daily matters. It is important to maintain daily routines. Help the victim take care of basic needs such as meals and sleep.

It is important to discuss day-to-day matters. Find out whether the victim needs help with child care or other activities of daily life. The discussions do not always need to concern the experience of rape, even though discussing it is important for the victim's recovery.

When an adolescent has been subjected to sexual violence, it is important that others treat the victim in the same way as before the event. Be present and close by. It is important for the victim to know that you are available when needed.

A traumatic experience may cause sleep disorders, fear and difficulties to focus. Sexual violence damages the victim's basic sense of security. The victim may be afraid to go out alone. Volunteer to accompany the victim to, for example, an appointment with a physician or the police. Encourage the victim to seek professional help.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The victim may experience a variety of emotions, including vulnerability, shame, hopelessness, helplessness, fear, guilt and anger. You should express that you are there to support the victim and believe what has happened.

Tell the victim that the violence that has taken place was not the victim's fault. The victim could not have prevented it. It is important for the one who wants to help to be able to understand and show empathy. You cannot undo what has happened, but you can help the person you care about overcome the experience.

Be a listener. The victim should have the opportunity to talk about what has happened. Do not doubt the story or downplay the victim's experience. Let the victim talk about it as often as desired. Talking about what has happened gives the event structure in the victim's mind. Thereby the mental images of what has occurred are no longer uncontrollable flashes.

## RECOVERY PROCEEDS AT AN INDIVIDUAL PACE

The victim goes through strong and changing emotions. This is natural and aids the recovery process. Show that you understand and accept the victim's feelings. It is important to feel the various emotions. Crying, being sad and talking about the anger and fear is beneficial.

In some cases, the victim may not want to talk about the matter. It may also seem like the victim does not feel much. This occurs naturally at times. By avoiding thoughts and emotions connected to the event, the victim rests and gathers strength for recovery. However, if avoidance becomes chronic, the matter is not dealt with. If so, the victim should be encouraged to face what has happened.