

# 4E

# SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS: HOW CAN WE HELP?

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## E.1. WHAT IS *SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS*?

### Supporting Survivors or Victims: Key Questions

- What violence or abuse did the survivor or victim experience?
- What harms have resulted?
- What do they think will be helpful to them?
- Who can best offer this support?
- How are they getting ongoing support?

### What Is It?

Survivor or victim support focuses on providing for the health, safety and other needs and wants of someone who has been or is the survivor or victim of harm.

The needs and wants may extend to their children, family members, pets, and others who rely upon the survivor or victim and whose own health and safety may be affected by the harm affecting the survivor/victim. It may also extend to others because if others' needs are taken care of, this frees up the survivor or victim to be able to better focus on their own important needs and wants. For example, helping a survivor or victim take care of children, elderly parents, or job responsibilities may be very supportive to a survivor or victim. And it may also allow some relief so that they can devote some time and energy to take necessary steps to move forward.

Note: Throughout this Toolkit, we use both the words survivors and victims. Some people experiencing violence prefer to think of themselves as survivors, and others will identify as victims. Many people will simply want to be referred to by their name and not feel comfortable with either term. However, because this Toolkit needs to use some kind of language that will clarify how someone is related to the situation of violence, we have chosen to use both terms, survivors or victims, whenever possible. If space only allows for one term, we mostly use the term “survivor.”

### Why Is It Important?

Supporting Survivors or Victims can be the first step in addressing the harms that interpersonal violence brings. This includes physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual and financial harms. Some survivors or victims make the claim that it is the emotional harm that can hurt even more than the physical. Direct emotional harm can be brought about through constant fear, humiliation, put-downs and attempts to make someone doubt their own judgment and self-worth. This can be made even worse by isolation, shame, self-blame and blame by others that often accompany victimization by interpersonal violence.

Since interpersonal violence often involves people we know or even care deeply about, this can be confused by mixed feelings of love for the person doing harm or fear that coming forward to find help may also cause unwanted consequences to the person doing harm. We may fear that we risk losing someone close to us, that we will hurt the parent of our child, that they might end up in jail, that immigration authorities may take them away if they are undocumented, that they might lose their job, or that others will look down both on the person doing harm and on us for being victims of violence.

Even though people are generally much more aware about domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of interpersonal violence, misunderstanding and blame of victims still run very deep.

**Note:** Support for the survivor may not result in “healing.” Healing is a deeply personal process. Healing may not be a goal or a desire of the survivor or victim, person doing harm or anybody else involved in this intervention process. Or it may be a goal that is unrelated to this intervention, but rather pursued in another way. While healing may result from any aspect of this intervention and may be chosen as a goal, Creative Interventions does not assume that healing will necessarily result from violence intervention. Therefore, we leave it to those using this Toolkit to choose whether the term “healing” is useful to you.

### **What Survivor or Victim Support Can Look Like**

Survivor or victim support may include such things as:

- Believing the survivor.
- Listening to the survivor’s story, concerns and needs.
- Putting yourself in the survivor’s shoes – empathizing.
- Holding back before telling the survivor what to do or offering your advice.
- Holding back when you feel yourself becoming judgmental or impatient or having other negative feelings.
- Offering advice or feedback if the survivor wants it and being humble enough to see that your advice or feedback may not be right.
- Being patient with repetition.
- Being a sounding board to help the survivor get clear about what they want and need.
- Being patient with and helping the survivor or victim sort through mixed feelings and confusions such as confusion about:
  - Whether one is really in danger.
  - How they about the person doing harm.
  - What they want to do about the harm.
  - Whether or not they to stay with the person doing harm (if this is someone they are in a close or intimate relationship with)

- How the survivor feels about anyone addressing or confronting the person doing harm.
- Whether they want other people to know about what happened.
- Helping think through your role in providing things like:
  - Emotional support
  - Safety
  - Companionship
  - Help going to necessary meetings or appointments
  - Help thinking of who is a safe and trusted ally
  - Help with shelter, childcare, transportation, food, money and other needs
  - Help contacting other allies
  - Help educating other allies
  - Help building a network of support
- Being an ally through other aspects of a community-based intervention such as:
  - Acting as the facilitator
  - Engaging with the person doing harm
  - Playing other roles as listed in Section 4.C. Mapping Allies and Barriers or Section 4.F. Working Together
  - Engaging with the community to organize support, educate the community or challenge dynamics that contribute to violence
- Being an ally in active and consistent ways
- Finding your own support to prevent burn-out and resentment – this can be done with other allies as you form a team
- Keeping this story only among safe people
- Stopping yourself from telling their story in a gossipy way
- Helping them use this Toolkit and other useful resources
- Making your way through this Toolkit and other useful resources

## USING THE TOOLS IN THIS SECTION

The Supporting Survivors or Victims section highlights the importance of supporting survivors or victims and offers tools to think through what types of support might best meet their needs.

Every person and every situation is unique. Tool E1. What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Checklist offers a list of possible types of support a survivor or victim might want or need. It is good for allies to see this list especially since it might include things that a survivor or victim is unable to express or afraid to ask for.

Survivors or victims can use Tool E2. What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Guiding Questions to think more carefully about the kind of support that might be helpful to them, what they could ask for and what allies or resources might be able to offer this support.

Finally, survivors or victims may be involved in interventions at very different levels, from taking an active lead role to no involvement. This Toolkit works best with at least some level of involvement in the intervention by the survivor or victim. In fact, receiving support from allies willing to work together towards addressing, reducing, ending or prevention violence (violence intervention) can be a powerful form of support. Tool E3. Survivor or Victim Participation in an Intervention Chart helps a survivor or victim and the intervention team to better understand possible types and levels of survivor or victim participation. It also offers tips about how support can still be offered even if the survivor or victim is not at all involved in the intervention or even if they disagree with an intervention.



## **E.2. SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS? ACROSS THE 4 PHASES**

In Section 3.6. Interventions Over Time: 4 Phases, the Toolkit introduced the idea of 4 possible phases of interventions: 1) Getting Started, 2) Planning/Preparation, 3) Taking Action, and 4) Following Up.

Supporting Survivors or Victims will likely change throughout an intervention. It is difficult to determine how because survivors or victims have such a wide range of ways in which they are involved in interventions.

### **PHASE 1: GETTING STARTED**

Very often, a survivor or victim of violence is the first person to initiate an intervention. This may be done in a very subtle way – he or she may hint that there is a problem of violence or they may tell someone but quickly take back the story or minimize the violence. Survivors or victims of violence often want help but may be reluctant to reach out to others because of shame, fear or prior experiences of being dismissed or blamed.

Some survivors or victims may not want to talk about the violence because of these and other reasons. An intervention may get started because other people recognize the violence and want to do something about it – even when the survivor or victim is not ready or perhaps not even aware of what is happening.

Survivors or victims may want to talk about the violence – but only if they are encouraged and feel like they might actually get sympathy and help. The risk of speaking out may be weighed against the support that someone can expect to receive.

Yet other survivors or victims may be very vocal whether or not they get support from others. It is impossible to generalize how a survivor or victim will feel, express themselves or get involved in a community-based intervention.

The phase of getting started may be a time when the survivor or victim makes beginning attempts to reach out to others or when others reach out to the survivor or victim to offer help. The model of community-based intervention presented in this Toolkit can be a way for survivors or victims to express what they have experienced and what they want in their own words. If handled with care, it can offer them some sense of control – something that is usually destroyed in the experience of interpersonal violence. Getting the solid support of people they are close to like friends, family, neighbors, co-workers or other community members may be a good first step in changing their situation of violence.

## PHASE 2: PLANNING/PREPARATION

Again, it is difficult to generalize about how active a survivor or victim will be in the planning or preparation of an intervention. Survivors or victims may lead the planning and preparation. Or a group of allies may take leadership and make sure to support the survivor or victim in playing an active role in this phase.

If the survivor or victim decides to take more of a back seat or is less involved – for example, if they are a child, then it may be important to stay connected and check in with the survivor or victim regularly to make sure that they are aware of what is happening and can voice concerns, ask questions or adjust their level of involvement. It is important to keep up any and all levels of support, particularly since it may be easy to turn focus away from the survivor’s or victim’s needs as people get more involved in other aspects of the intervention.

## PHASE 3: TAKING ACTION

Similar to the planning and preparation phase, the survivor or victim may be taking a lead or very active role in taking action. If not, it may again be important to make sure he or she is aware of what is happening and are able to voice concerns or change their level of participation. As the intervention team takes action, especially if this involves addressing, reducing, ending or preventing the violence of the person doing harm, it is easy to lose focus on support for the survivor or victim. It is important to make sure that at least some allies remain connected to and supportive of the survivor or victim throughout the intervention.

## PHASE 4: FOLLOWING-UP

As the intervention moves into a phase of following-up, the survivor or victim may be in many different situations. They may have already moved on and be satisfied that an intervention took place. It is possible that a survivor or victim may feel like they can move on if the intervention was ultimately unsuccessful. For some, the fact that an attempt was made can seem like a success. The team may only be responsible for giving an update on a follow-up plan.

On the other hand, the survivor or victim may be actively involved and be the central person determining whether or not the intervention has reached the point where there is some closure. Following-up may be a phase during which period checking in regarding survivor support and safety may be planned to make sure that the intervention has long-term effect.



### RELATED TOOLS

Tools to identify the dynamics of harm experienced by the survivor or victim are in *Section 4.A. Getting Clear*. *Section 4.C. Mapping Allies and Barriers* can be used to find the right people to help offer survivor or victim support. Tools to help coordinate support of survivors or victims with the other aspects of the intervention are in *Section 4.F. Working Together*. Tools to think more deeply about safety as a form of support are in *Section 4.B. Staying Safe*. Getting more specific about other ways that supporting survivors or victims might look like as an intervention goal is in *Section 4.D. Goal Setting*.

## E.3. SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS TIPS

### #1 READ SOME BASICS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW.

Interpersonal violence is complicated. Although we may hear more about domestic violence or sexual assault these days, many misunderstandings still exist and many misconceptions about what it is and how to approach it. Read *Section 2. Some Basics Everyone Should Know*. Pay special attention to *Section 2.2. Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know* in order to have a clearer picture of what is going on. The *Section 2.3. Violence Intervention: Some Important Lessons* also shares important basics about interventions based upon the experiences of Creative Interventions.

Share this information with others who may be involved in a situation of violence and may need some resources to help them know what to do.

### #2 UNDERSTAND THE MANY BARRIERS TO SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS ASKING FOR SUPPORT.

Survivors or victims may not always be straightforward in stating their feelings or their needs. Fear of judgment from others, fear of retaliation from the person doing harm if they find out, self-blame and shame about being a victim – these and many other factors can make it difficult to talk about violence and to ask for support.

Many survivors or victims may have reached out to others for help and received a negative response or no response at all. They may be reluctant to try again or may fear that they will again get a reaction that might make them feel even more helpless and alone.

It may be easy to blame survivors or victims for not asking for what they need, for changing their minds, or for asking for too much. It is easy to think that it is the survivor's or victim's fault. We have many ways of and words for blaming the victim.

Supporting survivors or victims asks us to be patient, forgiving and non-judgmental. It asks us to have some understanding of the many barriers they face in seeking help.

### #3 DO NOT PROMISE MORE THAN YOU CAN GIVE. TRY TO GIVE WHAT YOU PROMISED.

It is also easy to promise many things if or when a survivor or victim tells us their story of violence. Think about what you can do – your time, your energy, your ability, your own safety. Work with others so that together you can offer support that none of you can do alone.

If you did promise something that you cannot deliver, talk honestly with the survivor or victim and take accountability for your inability to follow through. See if you can find other ways to offer support.

If you find yourself starting to blame the survivor or victim or others for your inability to follow through with your promises or commitments, take a step back and be honest with yourself about how it feels to let somebody down. Again, it is better to be honest with yourself and with the survivor or victim rather than cover up feelings of guilt, shame or embarrassment with blame.

## **#4 THE TYPE OF COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTION INTRODUCED IN THIS TOOLKIT WORKS BEST WHEN THE SURVIVOR OR VICTIM IS INVOLVED.**

Although many interventions will likely begin with and be led by a survivor or victim, this is not always the case. Survivors or victims may not want to be involved for many reasons. They may be young children or otherwise not in a position to be directly participating in an intervention. They may not recognize themselves as survivors or victims of violence. They may not want any changes to their situation. They might fear retaliation or losing their relationship. They may fear that an intervention will call attention to their victimization and associate that with shame, embarrassment or fear of judgment.

In other situations, the survivor or victim may want an intervention, but not want to be actively involved. They may think that it is the responsibility of others to finally step in and do something. They may be completely tired of and over the situation of violence and want to step away from any involvement. They may find it too emotionally difficult to be directly involved. They may simply think that the intervention would be more effective if they were not involved.

Allies may also not want the survivor or victim involved because they find that survivors or victims appear too emotionally involved or seem overly biased. They may not agree with the wishes or the perspective of the survivor or victim. They may want to protect the survivor or victim from any further involvement.

In this approach to violence intervention, Creative Interventions found that it is helpful if the survivor or victim is participating in some way in the intervention. The levels of participation may be that they are:

- a) Leading the intervention;
- b) Actively involved;
- c) Checking in on a regular basis to get information and give feedback;
- d) Getting information about what was done and how the intervention is going very infrequently; or
- e) Finding out about the final outcome of an intervention only.

Any of these levels is all right as long as there is some level of discussion and agreement to this level of participation by everyone.

**#5 HELP TO KEEP UP SURVIVOR OR VICTIM SUPPORT THROUGHOUT AN INTERVENTION.**

It is easy to forget survivor or victim support once an active intervention moves forward, especially if people focus on the person doing harm. Make survivor or victim support a central part of the intervention plan. Make sure at least one person has a primary role to keep connected with the survivor or victim, see what the survivor or victim wants or needs. Offer a space for survivors or victims to voice fears or concerns. Make sure that survivor or victim safety is maintained, or make sure that others connected to the survivor such as children or other dependents are also supported.

**#6 OFFER HONEST SUPPORT TO A SURVIVOR OR VICTIM.**

You may not always agree with the values, opinions or goals of the survivor or victim. This Toolkit offers a variety of tools for people to discuss and reach consensus on the values guiding the intervention and the goals of the intervention. It offers information and tools regarding common situations in which people disagree with the survivor or victim and with each other (See Section 3.4. Values to Guide Your Intervention and Section 4.D. Setting Goals) The Toolkit also address situations in which people may be unclear about who is the survivor/victim or the person doing harm (See Section 2.2. Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know). It promotes a holistic approach that takes into account the well-being of everyone involved in violence including the person doing harm.

This Toolkit encourages people to hold back when they experience feelings of judgment, blame and frustration with regard to the survivor or victim. It encourages people to self-check on where these feelings are coming from and whether or not they are coming from a personal bias against that particular person or some other aspect of that person such as their gender (male, female or other), race or class. It also acknowledges that working with violence and accompanying feelings of anger, fear, disappointment, shame and so on can easily turn people against the survivor or victim. Once you get clearer about your own feelings, it may be easier to separate these feelings from important opinions that you may have about the intervention process. As much as possible, step back and use the tools in this Toolkit to tackle differences and reach consensus. Honesty is an important part of this process.

## **#7 OFFERING SUPPORT CAN BE VERY DIFFICULT. MAKE SURE YOU HAVE YOUR OWN SUPPORT.**

Offering support can be difficult. It can be exhausting, frightening, and disappointing. It can bring up painful memories of our own histories of violence or other related experiences.

At times, our efforts to support may be unacknowledged and unappreciated. The survivor or victim may find that the support you offer is not they asked for or are comfortable with. You may make a mistake. Your attitudes or actions may cause harm – however unintentional. You might disappoint or anger the survivor or victim.

Understand that disappointment or anger can come from the stressful situation of violence and intervention. It can also be a very real response to shortcomings in the way you offer support.

Be willing to learn from these experiences. Forgive yourself for mistakes that you may make. And rely upon other intervention allies or your own allies to support yourself. Encourage an intervention team process that allows for time to step away, reflect and offer helpful feedback and support to everyone involved in the intervention.

## **#8 SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS CAN BE COMPLICATED IF YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON DOING HARM.**

Some of us who offer support to survivors or victims will also have a relationship to the person doing harm. We can be in a particularly good position to care about the person doing harm and also support the survivor or victim. Having people who can play both of these roles can help the team act in a more holistic way.

Having a relationship with the person doing harm can also bring about conflict. We might feel that our support for the survivor or victim is betraying the person doing harm. We might feel protective of the person doing harm and interpret the intervention as unfair or overly harsh. We might question our own loyalties and wonder whose side we are on.

It might be helpful to remind ourselves that supporting survivors or victims, in the long term, can also be beneficial to the person doing harm. Thinking about how to maintain an intervention process that feels like it supports the survivor or victim and is connected to and supportive of the person doing harm can help to drive a holistic intervention.

You may also find that you can play a better role actively supporting the person doing harm while lessening your direct role in supporting the survivor or victim or vice versa. Or you may have such difficulty playing these dual roles, that you decide to step back a distance from the intervention altogether. Use the tools in this Toolkit to help you figure out a way to offer support that minimizes your sense of conflict and makes best use of the compassion that you might feel for survivor or victim and the person doing harm.

## E.4. *SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS* SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Supporting Survivors or Victims may be a central part of many interventions to violence. However, the dynamics of supporting survivors or victims can vary greatly depending upon many factors.

One of those factors is the degree to which the survivor or victim is leading, participating in or agreeing with the intervention. Although many interventions will likely begin with and be led by a survivor or victim, this is not always the case. The following are some special considerations on supporting survivors or victims.

The relationship that the survivor or victim of violence has to support can be very different depending upon that person's personality, their experience in receiving help in the past, and their relationship to the person or people offering support.

Generally, most people experiencing violence will want that experience to change, whether it is addressing something from the past, ending violence in the present, or preventing violence in the future. It is also common that survivors or victims may not trust that the process leading to change will make things better. In fact, it is true that interventions to violence are not necessarily positive. They can lead to backlash.

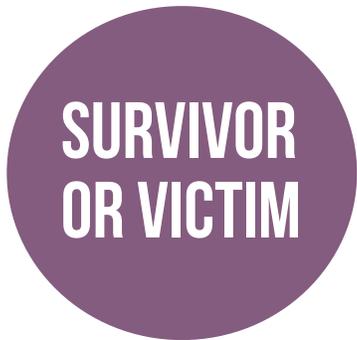
They can lead to more violence. They can expose the survivor or victim to gossip, judgment and possibly further harm if people start to blame the survivor or victim for the violence. Aspects of the intervention that people do not agree with could further expose the survivor or victim to blame for the intervention. It is no wonder that a survivor or victim may not trust that they will get the kind of support they need.

Sensitive, consistent and non-judgmental support, on the other hand, even if distrusted or even rejected at first may be accepted if it is extended over time. Trust can take a long time to build. Patience and understanding can go a long way.

If you are the survivor or victim, you may have difficult trusting that you will receive the support you need. You may find support inconsistent and, at times, disappointing.

Because this intervention approach relies upon a community of people – even if that community is only made up of you and one other person, this Toolkit encourages you to start with at least one person you can trust. Use the information or tools in this Toolkit to think about what kind of support you most need and to identify the best people to offer at least some pieces of support. Use the Toolkit to help your friends, family or other allies to know how best to offer their support to you.

Trust your own feelings about the kind of support you are getting. Is it helpful or not? Does it make you more confused or more clear-headed? Do you feel cared for? Does it make you feel even more helpless?



Try to identify the feelings that you have regarding the support you are receiving. Use this as an opportunity to speak honestly about your feelings, make changes regarding who you are receiving support from or what kind of support you are requesting from them.

You may also find that you need to make peace with the shortcomings of others or with the reality that no amount of support feels like it is enough. This does not mean that you have to reject the support coming your way, but that you can make wise use of this support, even if it is not exactly right.

Creative Interventions also found that survivors or victims may want an intervention to happen but may not want to be involved in any way. As much as this is understandable and may be agreeable to the people involved in the intervention, it may also make it difficult for them to make an effective intervention. The situation of violence may be complicated and difficult for them to understand even if they are supportive. They may come up with an intervention that you think completely misses the point based upon what happened. While this may seem to put a burden on the survivor or victim to make too many decisions or expose you to what can be disturbing details of an intervention that does not always go well, your participation can be helpful to the overall goal.

On the other hand, people involved in the intervention may not want the survivor or victim to actively participate due to differing opinions about what should be done or a feeling that they are being too closely watched for doing the right or wrong thing.

These two extreme situations can be difficult to manage. If possible, it is best to be somewhere in the middle and able to be flexible enough to talk about and deal with any tensions that come up if the intervention moves to one side or the other.

See Tool E.3. Survivor or Victim Participation in an Intervention Chart



The community ally (family, friend, neighbor, co-worker, community member) is likely to be offering support to the survivor or victim in some way. In some interventions, supporting survivors or victims may even be the focus of all or most of the intervention, especially if for whatever reason, the intervention does not address or engage the person doing harm at all.



If you are a community ally, supporting survivors or victims can look a variety of ways. The survivor or victim may be a close family member or friend and be someone that it is easy to support. You may know exactly what this person needs. They may be a person close to you but be difficult to support. You may know them well, but not be so good about knowing how to offer support. Or this situation of violence and intervention may bring up new challenges.

Sometimes community allies do not know the survivor or victim well but may have been brought into an intervention because they are somehow connected to them or perhaps are introduced by others on the team. At times, this can be an easy match. At others, it will take some time to figure out the best way to play a supporting role.

Supporting survivors is often a key aspect of an intervention and can be complicated. See Section 4.A.1. Supporting Survivors or Victims What Is Supporting Survivors or Victims and 4.A.3. Supporting Survivors or Victims Tips for more suggestions on how allies can help to support survivors or victims.

**PERSON  
DOING HARM**

In this Toolkit, we allow for the perspective of the person doing harm to enter the situation. This is different from many anti-violence organizations that often automatically dismiss this perspective as an attempt to manipulate the situation or blame the victim. Creative Interventions has found that people doing harm have very different approaches to supporting survivors or victims.



On one extreme, some people doing harm wish only to continue harming the survivor or victim. An intervention may be the greatest threat and may bring on desires for retaliation in any way possible.

Other people doing harm want to support the survivor or victim because they hope that it will lead to a continued relationship. If the survivor or victim desires a continued relationship, then this can form the basis for some kind of co-existence or even closeness. If the survivor or victim does not desire a continued relationship, then support can look more like manipulation to get what the person doing harm wants.

Efforts to support survivors or victims may also be genuine. It is important to take the lead of survivors or victims to sense whether or not this is the type of support they want. It may also be important for allies to watch to make sure that efforts by the person doing harm to support survivors or victims are not used to get out of accountability or to gain access to survivors or victims in order to continue an abusive relationship. This may seem like a cynical interpretation of a positive effort. However, in the experience of Creative Interventions, such outcomes happened frequently enough to raise caution.

If you are the person doing harm or are the person accused of doing harm, the greatest support you can offer the survivor or victim may be your ability to take accountability for the harm you have caused. This includes stopping all forms of harm, acknowledging the harm, recognizing and acknowledging the consequences of harm even if you did not intend them, making repairs for harm, and changing attitudes and behaviors that have been harmful and that have contributed to your harm.

If you have been in a position of causing harm, then it is very possible that your interpretation of support may not be the same as that of the survivor or victim you have harmed. Much of accountability is about shifting from a me-centered perspective to an other-centered perspective. This is not an easy shift to make.

See Section 4.F. Taking Accountability and other parts of this Toolkit to get a better idea of how you can take accountability, offer appropriate and welcome support to the survivor or victim and others affected by your attitudes and actions, and reach outcomes that are truly beneficial to them. Be open to how taking accountability is helpful to you, as well.

# FACILITATOR

People are rarely 100% allies or 100% barriers. Try supporting the group to think creatively and to expand out of “black and white” and “either/or” thinking. When we think of people as 100% allies, we can overlook ways in which they are not the best fit in to certain roles. When we think of people as 100% barriers, we can miss ways in which they could be well suited to a specific task. It is possible for participants in an intervention to be allies to one goal and barriers to another.



## #1 ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LEARN FUNDAMENTAL INFORMATION FIRST IF THEY HAVE NOT ALREADY.

This Toolkit is long and can be overwhelming. Some important parts of this Toolkit are Section 2. Some Basics Everyone Should Know. An especially important section can be Section 2.2. Interpersonal Violence: Some Basics Everyone Should Know that discusses much more about the dynamics of violence and common misunderstandings that people have.

It can be useful for you to be familiar with the different sections of this Toolkit and to read more carefully through these sections. Also encourage people to read these sections. If reading is not the best option or they cannot read English or the language that this Toolkit is in, you can help by reading this and other sections to them in a language they understand or use other formats to pass on this information.

## #2 MAKE SURE TO RETURN TO THE SURVIVOR OR VICTIM AS AN ANCHOR TO THE INTERVENTION PROCESS.

If the survivor or victim is part of or at least connected to the intervention process, then you as a facilitator may be in a good position to make sure that people are considering the perspective of the survivor or victim, their needs and wants, and their safety. This may be done by regularly checking in with the survivor or victim during a discussion to make sure the process is working for them.

If the survivor or victim is not in the room, you may help support them by reminding people that someone needs to connect with the survivor or victim, see how they are doing, see what they need, and keep them informed about the progress of the intervention. Perhaps this will be part of your own role as the facilitator.

This may be by making sure that at least one person has a role of supporting the survivor directly by staying connected to them and making sure that their needs are being met, they are staying safe, and any fears or concerns are being addressed. This support may be extended to their children, family members, friends and pets.

### #3 MAKE SURE THAT SURVIVOR OR VICTIM SAFETY IS ADDRESSED.

The survivor or victim may be in an especially vulnerable position with regard to safety. Actions taken by the intervention team may lead in anticipated and unanticipated ways to retaliation against the survivor or victim as they have been a central target of violence by the person doing harm.

While the possibility of retaliation may not stop you from going ahead with the intervention, all risks must be examined and explored before moving forward. Safety plans need to be established so that the survivor or victim as well as allies or others involved in the intervention are not further harmed as a result of the intervention. This concern may also extend to other vulnerable people such as children, family members, friends, pets or anyone that is involved in or close to the intervention.

## **E.6. SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS**

### **REAL LIFE STORIES & EXAMPLES**

#### **Story E. Getting Support from My Co-Workers**

So we'd been married for a year and a half. We were both very involved politically. I had a new baby, I was at home. I know that I started feeling like my life was kind of slipping away.

But his world started to change. And he started to become much more community-involved and I was less and less community involved. And it led to a lot of tension in the relationship, and a lot of tension around me being at home and he being sort of out in the world. I think the arguing and the fighting and the challenging verbally started. And it just escalated. And became very contentious, you know. The relationship was very contentious.

So I remember he came home one night, and he had been out. And I remember he came home one night and we just started fighting. I picked up a glass and threw it at him and it hit him in the side of his face and that was it. He chased me in the living room. We have this brick fireplace in the living room. He chased me in the house and grabbed me, threw me on the floor and just pounded my face into the brick wall. I mean, when thinking about it now, I'm thinking, "How did I survive that?" I felt like he was going to kill me. I mean, I felt like this man has lost his mind, and I'm dead. I remember that he just kicked me, pounded my face into the brick wall, into this fireplace, and...and then he left.

The first assault was one thing. That was shocking to me. The second one was more shocking. Because the first one felt to me like he just lost it, and he just wasn't aware of what he was doing, and he just responded so violently because he lost control of himself. And that to me was not as shocking as the second time because I felt like the second time was almost more being very much more intentional. So I was much more shocked that actually happened after we got back together. I still felt like I was in a lot of shock, and I was very depressed.

You know, I was depressed after this happened. I was depressed for probably about three or four months. I was just in a deep, deep depression. And mostly because I felt like you know this was a person that I just didn't know. I just didn't see this side of him.

I couldn't go to work. My supervisors were very supportive. I mean my whole face was...I couldn't go to work because my face was so damaged that there was no way I could leave the house looking like I was looking. So my co-workers were very supportive and gave me the time I needed to be off.

I don't think we called the police. And I wasn't going to. I mean, police to me was never an option. I don't think I felt like they would have done anything at all. I wasn't necessarily opposed to the police, but I just didn't feel like I knew what their role was. So I didn't call them, but there was plenty of other support. And I don't think I ever, I don't think I felt like there was anybody who was not supportive of me. I never heard anybody say things like, "Well, you need to leave the motherf\*\*\*\*\*" or to say, "What did you do to provoke him?" I don't think I heard those kind of comments from anybody. I got a lot of support and affirmation and people wanting to be helpful.

I think the first level of support was concern for my physical well-being. And you know, really making sure that I felt safe. And where I was, was I safe? And did I feel like I needed some support to make me safe? And I don't think there was much of a sense from my friends of any sort of like domestic violence shelters or anything like that. I think it was, "Do you feel safe here in your house? He's not here, he's gone, do you feel safe? Do you feel like he'll come back? And if he comes back do you feel safe about that?" And so I think there was a lot of concern about my safety.

There was also a lot of concern about my mental health and what that meant in terms of just taking care of myself physically. People brought me food. "Are you eating?" "Do you need somebody to be here with you?" I mean, I think the fact that I was depressed was really scary for people. "Do you need us to be here to make sure you're eating?" "Make sure you're not sort of thinking about suicide or anything like that." So there was a, there was a lot of that. "Do you just need someone, do you just need someone to come and cook you some dinner or lunch or whatever." I had people that bought groceries for me, and brought food to me, and offered to come and help clean the house. And it wasn't at all patronizing. It was like, "You know what, we understand that right now you might not have the energy to do all of these things, so let us take care of you."

Even to the point where – I just, I never will forget this. We had hardwood floors at the time. And I remember one person saying, "Do you want me to come in here and paint your walls?" I mean, it was like, "We'll paint for you!" You know, I think they wanted to change the environment or create an environment where I felt comfortable. "Is there something different we can do here in your house." So I remember that a couple people came and painted my living room and dining room, and I remember getting new rugs on the floor.

So my friends were more concerned about my well-being and I had a little nine month old. They were concerned about "Was I able to take care of her and did I need some support in taking care of her?" So people were providing tangible things for me. And then, people were just willing. "You need to call us in the middle of the night, call me." I mean I just had people who were like, "Just call me." "You need to talk, just call me and talk." I felt like I was a burden, and I felt like I didn't want to impose this on my friends, but I felt like they were there. "You want to talk ad nauseum, talk ad nauseum." So I felt like there was just kind of listening, they were able to listen to me.

# TOOLS

## **4.E** SUPPORTING SURVIVORS



**Tool E1. What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Checklist**

**Tool E2. What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Guiding Questions**

**Tool E3. Survivor or Victim Participation in an Intervention Chart**

**SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS TOOL E1:**  
**WHAT DOES THE SURVIVOR OR VICTIM NEED? CHECKLIST**

Supporting survivors or victims can look many different ways to many different people. This tool offers ideas of possible types of support that survivors or victims have said have been helpful over time.

**POSSIBLE WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT A SURVIVOR OR VICTIM OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE**

- Make a human connection
- Let them know you care
- Listen to their story
- Ask them what they need
- Help them get what they need
- Let them know that interpersonal violence happens to many people
- Praise them for anything and everything they do to address their situation of harm – including talking to you
- Let them know that they are not alone
- Things you can offer:
  - Listening ear
  - Patience – through what may be their inability to make a decision, confusion, changing minds, repetition
  - Someone to lean on or hand to hold – through fear, shame, confusion, depression, embarrassment
  - Sounding board – to listen and offer feedback, not necessarily to give advice
  - Safety (See Section 4.B. Staying Safe)
  - Medical care
  - Mental health care or counseling
  - Religious or spiritual support

- Companionship
- Help supporting children or other dependents – childcare, child pick-up, activities with children, emotional support for children who may be going through hard time through violence or intervention
- Help taking care of pets or other beings or things that the survivor or victim usually cares for
- Help educating and informing others to be good allies – trusted friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, community members
- Help protecting from people who may bring risk or harm – including those who mean to be helpful but who are not
- Help support the person doing harm to take accountability – if you are in a position to do so (See Section 4.E. Taking Accountability)
- Help finding and connecting them to resources
- Help with housing or safe shelter if needed
- Help moving, storing things, packing, unpacking
- Help with accompaniment, rides/transportation, access to telephone or internet
- Help with other necessary things – (example, clothes, food, money, bus card)
- Help figuring out how they want to talk about their situation, what they specifically need, and what they want to prioritize
- Help with translation, interpretation, for non-English or limited-English speakers or hearing or visually impaired and explaining of factors such as culture or immigration status to services providers
- Help figuring out way around “systems” such as police, criminal justice, immigration, or child welfare if these systems might present risk or harm (for example, if they are an undocumented immigrant)
- Help them use the Toolkit
- Become familiar with this Toolkit
- Introduce them to Toolkit in a way that is useful (and not overwhelming) – may include reading pieces, photocopying pages, translating useful information
- Introduce other allies to the Toolkit in a way that is useful
- Play a role as an ally as presented in this Toolkit (See Section 4.C. Mapping Allies and Barriers)

**?** ***SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS*** **TOOL E2: WHAT DOES THE SURVIVOR OR VICTIM NEED? GUIDING QUESTIONS**

If you are a survivor or victim of violence and think you might want the support from others that you trust about your situation of violence, here are some questions to think about:

**WHO CAN SUPPORT YOU?**

1. Who are the people you usually turn to?
2. Who has been helpful – and what is it that made them helpful?
3. Who do you think could be helpful in supporting you with your situation of violence?
4. If you are not sure you want to turn to those you usually turn to, why or why not?
5. When you think about people to support you with your situation of violence, what is important to you?
6. Who are some other trusted people you might be able to talk to (if this is different than the list of people you usually turn to)?
7. If you cannot think of anybody right now, what are some types of people you could look for who might be able to help?

## WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT DO YOU WANT?

1. When you think about what kind of support you want, you think of the following (make a list):

(See the previous tool, Section 4.E. Supporting Survivors or Victims Tool E1: What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Checklist for a list of ideas that might be helpful)

2. When you look at the list above, the most important are (or list them in order with the most important on top):

3. What are some things that you definitely do NOT want?

4. Think about how to use this exercise to ask for help. You can practice asking for these things. You can meet with someone you trust and have them help you figure out how to find more support. You can use these lists to write a letter about what you want (and what you don't want).

 **SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OR VICTIMS TOOL E3:**  
**SURVIVOR OR VICTIM PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVENTION CHART**

While Creative Interventions encourages active survivor or victim participation, this can happen at different levels. This chart helps you sort out what level of survivor or victim participation best describes your intervention process – or – which level best describes what you would like your process to look like.

	<b>Survivor or Victim Leadership in the Intervention</b>	<b>Survivor- or Victim-Centered Intervention Goals</b>	<b>Survivor or Victim Coordination and Decision-Making</b>	<b>Communication with Survivor or Victim</b>
<b>Highest Level of participation and priority</b>	Survivor or victim is leading and directing the intervention	Survivor goals = intervention goals	Survivor is making all key decisions and coordinating individual allies or leading a group of allies	Survivor is making all decisions and so knows all information – decides what to communicate with other allies or person doing harm
<b>Priority but consideration of others is important</b>	Survivor or victim is leading the intervention but others may act in other important roles such as facilitator, coordinator or other key roles	Survivor or victim goals are the priority but there has been group input into and group agreement with goals	Survivor or victim is involved in all decision-making but there is also a process to get input from others	Survivor or victim knows all information and is involved in all decision-making but there is active involvement of a group that also has significant information
<b>Important but consideration weighed with others</b>	A group has agreed to some process of shared leadership – even if survivor may have actively started the process – or if there is a main facilitator or coordinator	Survivor or victim goals are central but they have also been taken into consideration with key input from others including ally or community goals – group consensus has been reached	A group is coordinating decision-making that includes the survivor or victim as a key contributor	There is a group process for shared information and communication with everyone including the survivor or victim
<b>Important but role is mostly to give feedback</b>	Survivor or victim has some distance from the intervention – agrees to a process to give feedback	Survivor or victim has participated in and agrees with the overall goals – may or may not be involved in changes in goals depending on prior agreement	Survivor or victim has some distance but has agreed to a process for giving feedback that is given special consideration	Survivor or victim has some distance but there is an agreed upon process and timing for giving information and receiving feedback
<b>Survivor or victim agrees but is not involved*</b>	Survivor or victim agrees generally with the intervention but will not be involved	Survivor or victim may have participated in and agree with the overall goals – may or may not be involved if goals change depending on prior agreement	Survivor or victim is not involved in coordination or decision-making	Survivor or victim may or may not be given information at some agreed-upon timing or perhaps at the end of the intervention

<b>Survivor or victim disagrees and is not involved*</b>	Survivor or victim disagrees with the intervention and is not involved	Survivor or victim disagrees but group considers known or likely survivor goals including safety	Survivor or victim is not involved in coordination or decision-making	Survivor or victim disagrees and may or may not be given at least some information to let them know what is happening with the intervention
<b>Survivor or victim is not at all involved*</b>	For some reason, survivor or victim is completely unavailable	Group considers known or likely survivor or victim goals including safety	Survivor or victim is not involved in coordination or decision-making	Survivor or victim if known or reachable may or may not be given information to let them know what is happening with the intervention

## \*WHAT IF THE SURVIVOR OR VICTIM IS NOT INVOLVED?

The last three rows show a situation in which the survivor or victim is not involved in the intervention process. Again, Creative Interventions has found that survivor participation is best. However, it may be possible to carry out a community-based intervention that minimally involves the survivor or victim or does not involve them at all.

For example, this may happen in cases where an organization or a community group has a policy to always deal with known situations of violence that happen within the organization or among its members. In this case, the organization or community group may have come to know about a situation of violence and even have been told by the survivor or victim. It is possible that the survivor or victim would request that nothing be done about it. An organization or community group might have a policy that is more “survivor-centered,” meaning that it would go along with whatever the survivor or victim requested. In this case, a request to do nothing may be followed even if the organization or community group wanted to take action.

On the other hand, the organization or community group could have a policy that they will take some type of action whenever they learn about a situation of violence or abuse, perhaps depending upon the level of abuse or the type. They may let the survivor or victim know that it is their policy and their responsibility to address the violence, preferably with the participation of the survivor or victim.

The survivor or victim may then decide to become involved even though they were hesitant at first. They may become involved at various levels of participation such as those outlined in the chart above. Or it is possible that they will still disagree with this decision, may ask not to be involved, or may even be actively against an intervention.

If the survivor or victim does not agree with the intervention or does not want to participate, then the organization still has the responsibility to support the survivor or victim as best as it can given the circumstances. In a holistic intervention, the well-being of all is taken into consideration – even among those who are not participating or willing to participate. While this usually refers to the person doing harm, this can also include the survivor or victim.

If the survivor or victim is not participating, then a community-based intervention still has the responsibility to support the survivor or victim as best as it can. This can include:

- Leaving an open door to the participation of the survivor or victim and process by which they can check in
- Finding a way to include their known goals or their likely goals into the intervention goals
- Offering support through the many options listed in Section 4.E. Supporting Survivors or Victims Tool E1: What Does the Survivor or Victim Need? Checklist.
- Offering an occasional update on the intervention which can include:
  - Requests made of the person doing harm and/or the community that did or allowed harm
  - What kind of follow up that the person or community doing harm has committed to and completed
  - Results of the intervention at some certain points of the intervention (for example, weekly, monthly, after certain key meetings or events or at the end/closure of an intervention)

In other situations, the survivor or victim may be completely unknown or unavailable. They may be in safe hiding and may need or request complete confidentiality. They may be too young to actively participate. They may be too injured or ill. They may not be alive. In these cases, a known person who can represent them such as a partner, a parent or guardian, a family member, or a close friend may serve as someone to connect to this person or to represent them as best as they can.