

# Rural Sexual Violence Response National Conference

Transforming—Ourselves. Our Community. Our Response.



# Rural Advocacy Through A Healing Lens

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LaShae Lopez she/her

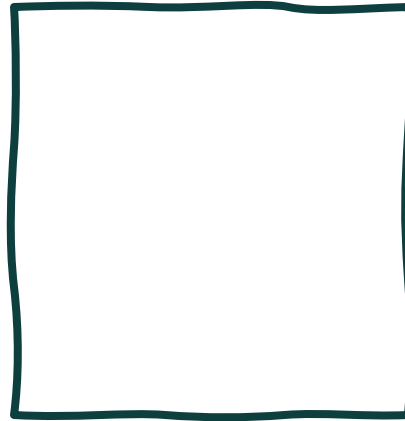
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# OBJECTIVES

1. Participants will leave the workshop with an understanding of what healing from trauma looks like and the support necessary for healing
2. Participants will leave the workshop understanding the role of an advocate in helping survivors of sexual violence heal from trauma
3. Participants will leave the workshop with an understanding of the skills necessary to support survivors of sexual violence in healing and how to practice these skills

# DISCUSSION QUESTION



MENTI METER!

*QUESTION: WHAT WORDS  
COME TO MIND WHEN YOU  
THINK OF HEALING?*

# HEALING IS

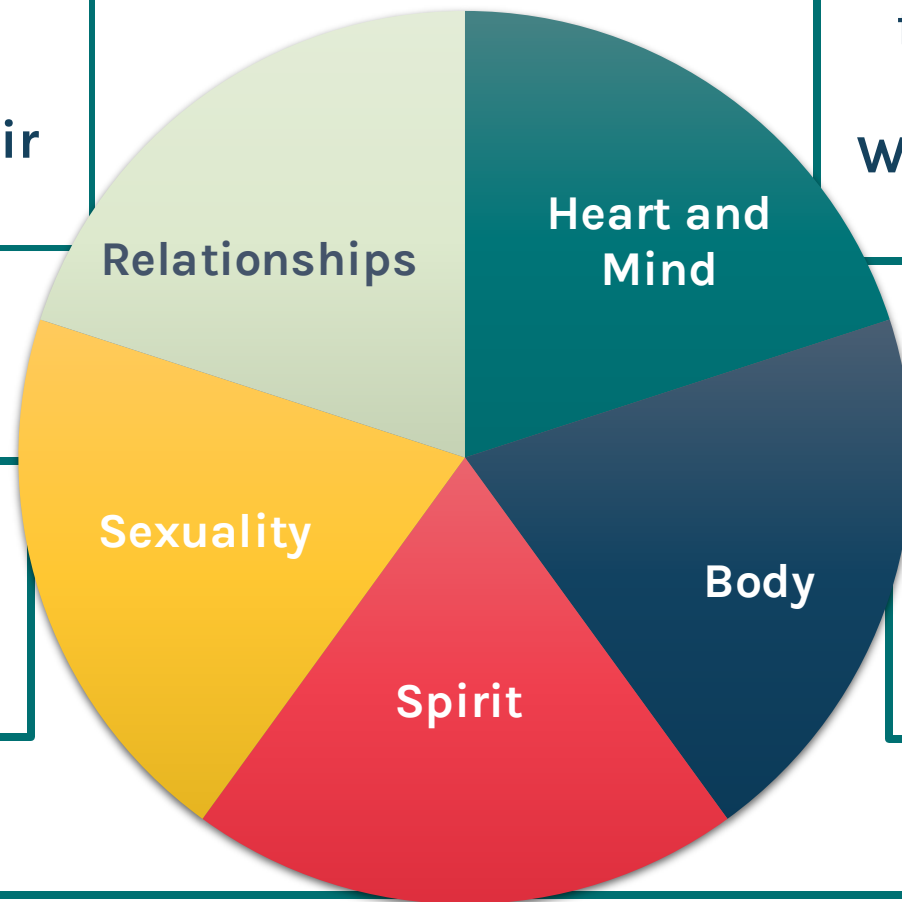
“caring for the many parts of oneself that have been interrupted by trauma: physical, emotional, social, mental, spiritual, and more. Healing takes time. Everyone’s needs are unique to their experience and may change over time.”

(Healing Services for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse, a course for SASP administrators, Resource Sharing Project, 2021)

# AREAS OF HURT, AREAS OF HEALING

What will help the survivor feel more connected socially?  
What resources could help survivors build, end, and repair relationships after trauma?

What would help the survivor feel safe and grounded in their own body?  
What will help them on their healing journey?



What will help the survivor feel more comfortable and in tune with their sexuality?

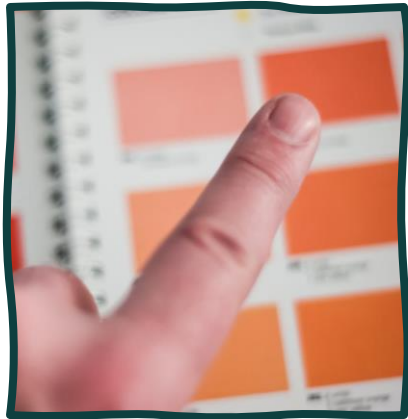
What resources can help survivors meet their physical needs?

What resources will help survivors feel more connected to or repair their relationship to their spirituality?

# WHY IS HEALING IMPORTANT?

- Everyone has been affected by sexual violence and is trying to cope and heal from it
- Sexual violence can impact someone directly at any point in their lives and in many different ways
- Healing is what survivors are often looking for, even if other supports and services don't fit
- Healing is often the less tangible but most impactful part of advocacy services

# HEALING NEEDS TO BE



SELF  
IDENTIFIED



SELF PACED



SELF  
MOTIVATED



# ADVOCATES ROLE IN HEALING

- Help survivors figure out what is healing for them
- Teach and demonstrate skills that can help survivors feel regulated, calm, and in control
- Assist survivors in finding resources and information that supports healing and their ability to meet their needs
- Help survivors navigate systems and situations that impact their healing
- Collaborate with different partners to improve survivors' access to healing

## PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT IS HOW ADVOCATES CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS HEALING JOURNEY'S

- It is the way we learn about the survivor, their story, and their needs
- It is often the underlying support survivors are seeking
- If we are not able to meet any of their other needs, we can always provide emotional support

# ADVOCATES CAN PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT UTILIZING THE FOLLOWING SKILLS

Empathetic and Active Listening

Choice Points

Safety Planning

Grounding

Boundary Setting

# KEY SKILLS: ACTIVE AND EMPATHETIC LISTENING

Showing support and validation in a way that conveys belief and increases connection

- Active and empathetic listening is essential in building trust and relationships
- Empathetic listening is responsive, not reactive

Resource: Listen Up! Active Listening as Advocacy. Resource Sharing Project & NSVRC. 2019

# In practice: Active and Empathic Listening



# ACTIVE AND EMPATHETIC LISTENING...

- Give the person your full attention
- Be mindful of body language, facial expression, pacing, and tone
- Keep yourself regulated so you can be present and pay attention to what is shared
- Observe changes you see in the other person and voice them when appropriate
- Demonstrate
  - Validation & Encouragement
  - Reframing
  - Mirroring

# MODELING ACTIVE AND EMPATHETIC LISTENING

- “What I heard you say was...”
- “I heard you say this *(restate action or event)* made you feel like *(restate emotion)*. Is that right?”
- “It’s okay to still feel emotional when you think about what happened.”
- “From what you’ve told me, it sounds like you hold a lot of the blame for what happened. That must be hard to deal with.”
- “Just because your body was aroused doesn’t mean you wanted to what happened.”
- “I’m okay with silence if you need time to think or process.”

# KEY SKILLS: CHOICE POINTS

**A moment where people can pause and actively make a decision**

- People who have experienced sexual violence may have a difficult time making decisions
- Choice points help them identify places throughout their lives where they do have choices, even if those choices aren't ideal
- Help those who have experienced harm to recognize their power, trust themselves, and mindfully choose the best decision for themselves

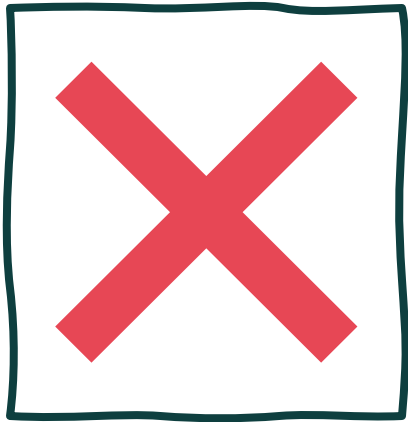
Resource: *Advocacy Skills: Choice Points. Resource Sharing Project, 2022.*



## DISCUSSION QUESTION: CHOICES

Why may it be difficult for survivors of sexual violence to make choices?

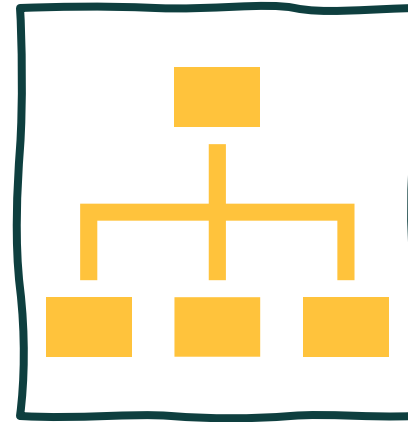
# DECISIONS, DECISIONS



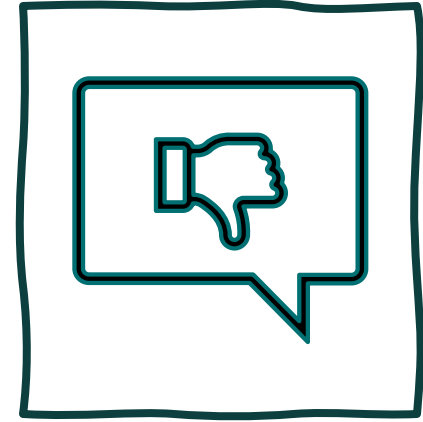
Sexual violence in itself is a violation of choice



Survivors are blamed for their choices and actions related to the sexual violence they experienced



There is often an infinite number of choices, which may seem overwhelming



Survivors may defer to someone else making decisions for them to find a sense of safety, to avoid blame, or to appease the other person

## CHOICE POINTS



- Ground yourself in curiosity about that person's life, experiences, and identity
  - Recognize there are choices before, during, and after any event
  - Try to keep the choices simple
  - Try to verbalize all options that can be made for that decision
- [Resource: Advocacy Skills: Developing Curiosity. Resource Sharing Project. 2022.](#)

## EXAMPLES OF CHOICE POINTS



- To sit facing or away from the door
- To bring a drink or a snack with them (and which snack or drink)
- Have a fidget toy
- What name would they like to use
- If and when they would like to take breaks during the meeting
- Would they like to practice grounding exercises after the meeting (and which ones)

# KEY SKILLS: SAFETY PLANNING

## A plan to help people keep themselves safe in a holistic manner

- Many people who experience sexual violence do not feel safe in their own bodies long after the danger has passed
- What many people who experience sexual violence need is assistance identifying and working through triggers
- People cannot control when or what triggers them, and they may discover new triggers throughout their life

Resource: Enhancing Knowledge: Brief Introduction to Trauma and Triggers. Resource Sharing Project. 2022

# WHAT ARE TRIGGERS?



# BUILDING A SAFETY PLAN

Guiding Question: What helps the person that was harmed feel safe?

A safety plan is:

- Short and easy to remember
- Practiced and established
- Determined by the holistic needs of the person who needs support

# TRIGGER PLANNING QUESTIONS

- What are my triggers?
- When I am triggered, what happens in my body?
- When I'm triggered, what do I need to feel calm?
- When I'm triggered, what can help me regulate myself and be centered in my body?
- When I'm triggered, what can other people around me do to help me calm down?
- What are some things people should not do to help me calm me down?

Resource: [Survivor Support: Working through Triggers. Resource Sharing Project. 2022.](#)



# KEY SKILLS: GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

**The feeling of being present and connected in the here and now**

- Many people who experience sexual violence feel disconnected from the present
- Grounding can help someone feel reconnected while being triggered
- Grounding uses our senses while connecting our body to our mind and emotions
- The more grounding techniques we know, the more support we can provide

**Resource (Webinar): Understanding Dissociation and Sexual Violence: Grounding.  
Resource Sharing Project. 2022**

## Let's Practice Grounding: Breathing

“Sometimes, when I feel overwhelmed, I like to do a breathing exercise. Would you like to try it with me?”

Resource: Let's get grounded: A Toolkit For Survivors. Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence. 2019



## LET'S PRACTICE GROUNDING: BOUNDARIES

“Setting  
boundaries can  
seem hard. What  
does that feel like  
in your body to  
say no?”

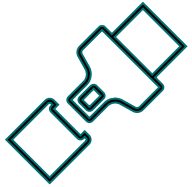


# KEY SKILLS: BOUNDARY SETTING

## Limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships

- People who experience sexual violence have often had violated
- People who experience sexual violence may have trouble identifying, setting, and maintaining their personal boundaries

# WHEN SETTING BOUNDARIES



Remember that they deserve to feel safe and can make choices for themselves



Think about how to set boundaries in a consistent and clear way



Strategize around events and times that they may feel pressure to be around those people

# BOUNDARY SETTING COULD SOUND LIKE:

- “This is something I need to do for my healing. You don’t have to agree, but I ask that you respect my choice.”
- “This is a boundary for me that I’ve asked you to respect. I’m not going to change my mind.”
- “I’ve already explained to you why I feel this way. This person has hurt me in the past without taking accountability for what they’ve done.”
- “I wish you would support me on this.”
- “I’m not comfortable with this.”
- “NO.”

# THANK YOU 😊

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