

Potential Responses to Disclosures of Traumatic Experiences

- I'm sorry you were hurt in that way.
- You are not alone. Childhood abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault is more common than people recognize or are willing to acknowledge.
- It takes a lot of courage to tell your story.
- You have been through a lot and survived. You must be very strong.
- What happened was not your fault.
- You are not to blame for what happened to you.
- This is only what happened to you – it is not who you are.
- No one has the right to hit another person/force another person to have sex.
- Growing up in an environment of violence is difficult for anyone and especially for a child.
- Let me know how I can make you more comfortable as we continue with this meeting.
- We now know that there is a direct relationship between these experiences and a person's physical health: Would you be interested in talking with someone about this?
- You deserve help in dealing with something so difficult. At the close of our meeting, would you like me to connect you with someone you could talk to about this?

Suggestions for Avoiding Re-traumatization

- Greet the person while s/he is fully dressed.
- Avoid positioning yourself between the person and the exit door.
- Ask what you can do to make the interview process more comfortable.
- Ask permission before you touch the person.
- Use grounding techniques if the person seems to be disconnected or in distress.
- Restore a sense of control to the person by providing her/him with as much choice as possible.

Adapted from Clardie (2004)