

# Healing from Sexual Trauma

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Sexual assault is defined as any sexual activity that occurs without one's *explicit* consent. Individuals who experience a sexual assault are at a higher risk of experiencing PTSD, anxiety, or depression (Smith and Segal, 2019). If you believe that you've experienced any form of sexual trauma, here are a few steps to help you cope.

## REMEMBER IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT AND YOUR FEELINGS ARE VALID

After experiencing a sexual assault, survivors may have a range of reactions including taking action, minimizing the trauma, or completely denying it (Marin, 2017). The first step towards healing is to acknowledge your trauma and understand that it is normal to feel angry, hurt or sad.

## TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

Talking about your experience with someone you trust can not only lift the weight off of your shoulders, but it can also provide different perspectives on coping. Along with reaching out to a friend or therapist, you may also consider joining a support group, where you will be surrounded with people who share similar experiences.

## RECOGNIZE TRIGGERS AND FIND WAYS TO COPE WITH THEM

A trigger is anything that reminds you of your prior trauma and brings back those initial negative emotions. Some common triggers include social media posts, television scenes or specific places or sounds that are associated with your trauma. Strategies like grounding techniques and deep breathing can help you to relax in the event that you are triggered.

## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Take time to really listen to your body and find out what things make you feel safe. Activities like yoga and meditation are good for reconnecting with your body, while journaling is great for keeping in touch with your emotions and tracking your growth throughout your healing journey.

## BE PATIENT

Be kind to yourself. Healing is an ongoing process and it takes time. Setting small goals for yourself (such as going to therapy once a week or mediating for 15 minutes each day) can help you regain control over your life.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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### NATIONAL RESOURCES

#### **National Sexual Assault**

##### **Hotline:**

[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

1-800-656-4673

#### **SAFE Sexual Assault Hotline (Military):**

[www.safehelpline.org](http://www.safehelpline.org)

877-995-5247

#### **National Sexual Violence Resource Center:**

[www.nsvrc.org/find-help](http://www.nsvrc.org/find-help)

### CAMPUS RESOURCES

#### **End Rape on Campus:**

[www.endrapeoncampus.org](http://www.endrapeoncampus.org)

#### **Know Your IX:**

[www.knowyourix.org/](http://www.knowyourix.org/)

Along with these resources, you can also reach out to your school's counseling center and Title IX office

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