

EMBRACE YOUR VOICE

HOW YOU TALK ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE MATTERS.

The things you say every day send a message about your beliefs and values. When you stand up for survivors of sexual violence, you send a powerful message that you believe and support them.

WHAT INFLUENCES YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

- Your ideas about sexual violence – including portrayals of what a victim looks like, who perpetrates sexual assault, and more – might be informed by TV shows, movies, news reporting, and other forms of media.
- The reality is that sexual assault in the media is often inaccurate and doesn't tell the whole story.
- Reflect on where you've seen sexual violence shown or talked about. How might that have impacted your views or led to assumptions you make about sexual assault?

HOW YOUR WORDS AFFECT OTHERS

- Chances are someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence. They might not have told anyone out of fear of being blamed or judged.
- If someone in your life is considering sharing something personal with you, they are likely listening to your opinions or attitudes for clues on how you will respond.
- A comment or joke based on assumptions or stereotypes might not seem like a big deal, but it could make someone feel unsafe about sharing personal or painful things with you.

For example: "I could never tell her what happened to me. She said if victims of sexual assault don't go to the police, then it wasn't serious."



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Don't wait for a critical moment to say the right things. The words you choose every day communicate your values.
- When you hear comments that blame victims or make light of sexual violence, speak up so others know you don't agree. Even if you don't have a perfect response, this shows you do not believe in stereotypes, you believe survivors, and you're a safe person to talk to.

For example: "That commercial made me uncomfortable. I don't know exactly why, but I think everyone should be treated with respect." or, "I don't think that's true – I believe people when they say that someone has hurt them."

YOU CAN BECOME AN AGENT OF CHANGE

- Our words shape the world around us.
- Whether you are showing your support for a survivor or helping someone better understand these issues, your voice is powerful and necessary in this conversation.