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What to do if a young person tells you about a negative sexual experience they have had

- 1. Do say "I believe you"**

Even if what they are telling you appears disjointed and confused. This is a very normal reaction for a young person to have as a result of trauma. This does not mean they are not telling the truth. Let them know you believe them and are there to support them.
- 2. Don't ask things like "Are you sure?" or "Were you drinking?"**

While it is normal to try and make sense of what has happened, questioning their experience like this may sound like you think it's their fault. Try to listen without judgement.
- 3. Don't push the child for details about what happened**

It's normal to want to know what happened to try and make sense of things, but asking the young person to explain in detail can be very upsetting for them. They might only tell you some of what happened, or they may tell you the whole story. Either is ok. You do not need to know everything; you are not the investigator.
- 4. Do tell the young person who else you are going to tell**

In most traumatic events people experience a loss of control, therefore, it is important to include the young person in the process of seeking out support. They may be anxious about this, explain that in order to keep them safe, you need to tell someone else that can help (such as school staff, TUSLA, or someone else).
- 5. Do inform your Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

This is typically the Principal or Vice Principal of your school. The DLP is responsible for any reporting to Tusla. Once informed of a disclosure they will attend to following the policy and procedures of the institution immediately.
- 6. Do contact your TUSLA local duty care social worker**

If you do not have a DLP in your institution, you can contact TUSLA directly. Every county has a designated local duty care social worker employed by TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency. You can ring this person and ask them what the best course of action would be in the situation you are dealing with.
- 7. Do make sure the young person is safe**

After they have disclosed to you, make sure they have somewhere safe to go afterwards. This could be the nurses office, the library, or some other safe place in your school. If it is safe for them to go home, arrange this for them. If the young person does not feel safe at home, you can contact TUSLA to assist you with arranging a safe place for them to stay. Often, the young person may just want to return to the classroom (normality) after disclosure.
- 8. Do look after yourself**

The best way to look after a young person that has disclosed to you is by ensuring you are also looking after yourself. You can seek out support and counselling from your local Rape Crisis Centre for help in dealing with this difficult time.

National 24 Hour Rape Crisis Helpline: 1800 77 8888

Chidline: 1800 666666

TUSLA: tusla.ie