

THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

# CARE

CAMPUS AWARENESS RESPONSE & EDUCATION

*GUIDE FOR*

*SUPPORTING STUDENTS*

*WHO MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL TRAUMA*

*OFFICE OF EQUITY AND DIVERSITY*

*Sponsored by a PA State It's On Us Grant*



# Contents

## Contents Left Section

- Your Responsibilities as a Non-Confidential Resource
- Practical Suggestions from Student Survivors
- Topics That May Be Difficult for Survivors to Discuss
- Understanding Common Reactions to Sexual Violence
- Reflection and Workspace

## Contents Right Section

- What To Do If a Student Discloses to You
- Recommended Supportive Practices in the Classroom
- Facilitating Difficult Conversations in the Classroom
- Resources and Support for Faculty and Students
- Review of Sexual Violence Definitions
- Supporting Student Survivors in the Classroom

# Reflection and Workspace

Use this space to reflect on the components of your teaching you could revisit, revise, or reframe to be more trauma-informed and supportive of student survivors. For example: course syllabi language, class activities, policies around attendance, specific content you introduce in your courses, or the way you introduce class readings and assignments.

**Areas for Reflection & Reframing**

**Questions I Have & Information I Need**



# Understanding Common Reactions to Sexual Violence

Every survivor experiences trauma and healing differently and in their own time, but there are a number of common reactions to sexual violence that you may notice in interactions with your students. This list is in no way complete, but provides you with a small sampling of common physical, emotional, cognitive, and social symptoms of sexual trauma:

- Difficulty concentrating or completing tasks
- Dissociation, zoning out, sense of detachment
- Changes in eating, sleeping, and hygiene patterns
- Gastrointestinal issues, headaches, nausea
- Increased substance use/abuse, eating disorders
- Depression, numbness, fatigue, decreased affect
- Isolation, withdrawal from people and activities
- Mood swings, loss of control, unpredictability
- Marked changes in personality or energy level
- Anxiety, anger, fear, nervousness, panic attacks
- Hypersensitivity to light, noise, touch, or people
- Flashbacks, nightmares, distracting thoughts
- Shame, guilt, self-blame, sense of humiliation



Source: University of Michigan Sexual Assault Prevention & Awareness Center

## Topics that May Be Difficult for Survivors to Discuss

**Each and every survivor** has lived through a unique experience, so individual survivors will have topics, specific to them, that they find difficult to hear and/or talk about. You should never assume or anticipate that these topics will be the same for all survivors; however, some basic sensitivity and awareness can help. Some (not all) difficult topics for survivors may include:

- Discussion of stalking, rape, abuse, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, sexual violence, or other forms of violence
- Themes of power, control, manipulation
- Topics of toxic masculinity, misogyny, sexism
- Sentiments of victim-blaming in any context
- Topics around gender, sexuality, virginity
- Discussion of consent or individual agency
- Language of trauma, even when it is used around topics unrelated to sexual violence -e.g. "The rape of natural resources" -e.g. "Beats me," "take a stab at it," "tear you a new one," "hit on her"

Please also note that survivors may be affected or upset by a topic that (to some) is not explicitly related to sexual assault, harassment, or violence. There may be something about a given topic, description, language, or situation, that may remind a survivor of their abuser or their experience. Trauma is complicated and can show up in unexpected ways.

# Practical Suggestions from Student Survivors

- Clearly label in the syllabus any readings, assignments, projects, or discussions that may relate to the subject of sexual violence or sensitive topics (this can be hard to anticipate).
- Help students understand what to expect from your course. Provide a written overview in the syllabus of your responsibilities as a non-confidential resource on campus, along with an explanation of what that means for students. You can share confidential and other resources as well.
- Offer a straightforward disclaimer around your expectations for the course. For example: *Aspects of this course may be emotionally difficult, and learning about violence is always challenging. You may personally connect with or be affected by some of the material covered in this course, so I urge you to identify a support system outside of this class. I am happy to meet with you to discuss any concerns or accommodation needs, but I also encourage you to seek out confidential or other resources.*
- Make it clear that you strive to create a safe space in the classroom and that this is an ongoing project that is up to everyone in class to uphold. Tell students that the learning or insights they gain in class should leave the classroom, but the shared expectation is that any personal details that are shared should not.
- Give advance verbal notice (both at the start of the semester and the week or class period before) for upcoming readings or discussions that involve sensitive topics. This practice allows students to prepare and to make necessary accommodations.
- Present material in a way that encourages all students to understand how deeply personal and sensitive issues of sexual violence are for many people. Foster engaged pedagogy by helping students to grasp the importance of their own continued learning around these difficult topics.
- Guide or redirect class discussions before they inflict harm or make a student feel unsafe. If a victim-blaming statement or false generalization about sexual violence is made, address it directly. By taking the time to reflect and regroup, you affirm the gravity of the topic, and your actions (or silence) will speak volumes to student survivors.
- Never explicitly ask students to discuss or publicly reflect on their personal connections to sexual violence. Everyone should have the power to decide whether to disclose their experiences.
- If your course content involves continuous or deep engagement with sensitive topics, create ways for students to engage in private or opt-in ways. e.g., instead of an in-class group discussion of an article on sexual violence, a private writing reflection better allows students to apply class concepts without needing to disclose their own experiences or disengage from the discussion.

# Your Responsibilities as a Non-Confidential Resource

**Faculty and Staff** often serve as the initial recipient for students' disclosures related to sexual harassment and sexual misconduct experiences.

Many students opt to not file reports with law enforcement for multiple reasons. Often, they do not think the incident was serious, they do not realize that what happened was sexual misconduct or harassment, they fear that parents and friends will find out, or they are afraid that they will not be believed or will be treated with hostility.

If a student is sharing this information with you, they likely consider you a trusted advisor- it is important that you let students know upfront (in person and/or in your class syllabus) that you are NOT in fact a confidential resource on campus, but a responsible reporter.

Unless you are employed in the counseling center, student health center or a priest in your pastoral capacity, all staff and faculty are nonconfidential and mandatory reporters. This means that you are required to report any information you receive about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator.

**Confidential Resources:** Confidential communications legally cannot be disclosed to another person without the complainant's consent, except under very limited circumstances, such as allegations involving the physical or sexual abuse of a child or vulnerable adult or an imminent threat to the life of any person. Those individuals who want the details of reports of sexual violence to be kept confidential should speak with a confidential resource.

At the University, **Confidential Resources** include:

- Counseling Staff at the Counseling Center - 570-941-7620
- Medical Staff at Student Health Services - 570-941-7667
- Priests acting in their pastoral capacity only (cannot be the student's faculty member)

**Non-Confidential Resources:** Only confidential resources can promise confidentiality. All other University employees who become aware of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct incidents or allegations **are required to report** the matter to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator.

The information you provide must include all relevant details, including the name of the individual reporting the allegation of sexual violence, the name(s) of the person(s) accused of the misconduct, other people involved in the incident, and the date, time, and location of the incident, if known.

Allegations of policy violations will be considered private and will only be shared with other University employees on a need-to-know basis. The allegations will not be shared with law enforcement without the consent of the individual who has alleged the sexual misconduct.

If you are not a confidential resource, you are asked to make every effort to refer an individual to confidential resources as described above before the individual has disclosed an incident that requires reporting to the Title IX Coordinator. We strongly recommend letting students know upfront that you are not a confidential resource -in class, in conversation, and/or in your course syllabus. If you sense a student is about to disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to you, you may say:

*"I apologize for interrupting, but I want to let you know that I am not a confidential resource on campus, which means that I will need to share anything you may tell me about an experience of sexual misconduct with our Title IX Coordinator. This is just our University policy, which is in place to ensure you receive the resources and support you may need. I can let you know who the confidential resources on campus are, or connect you with them. I want you to be able to make a choice about who you feel comfortable sharing with."*

However, it is not always possible to know how or when a student may disclose to you. If a student does tell you about an experience of sexual misconduct, please let them know that you will need to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. Explain why and let them know you will not share with anyone else. You can then refer them to other resources.

# Supporting Student Survivors in the Classroom

This resource guide for supporting student survivors of sexual violence was created by the University of Scranton Office of Equity and Diversity and the Jane Kopas Women's Center.

This guide provides information about some of the challenges student survivors face in the classroom, describes faculty members' reporting responsibilities, and offers ideas for how to support both self-identified survivors and students who may not disclose their experiences to you.

Faculty and staff can best support student survivors by educating themselves on the impacts of sexual trauma, addressing violence-related topics in an intentional manner, and offering students affirming choices in how they can engage as part of the University learning community.

We thank you for your care and commitment to our students and to the University community.



# Review of Sexual Violence Definitions

**Sexual Harassment** is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the University's education program or activity. It may also include unwelcome sexual or gender-based behavior that creates an environment that would reasonably be perceived and is perceived by the complainant as hostile or abusive. Sexual assault is the most serious form of sexual harassment. Examples include acts of aggression, intimidation, or hostility, whether verbal or nonverbal, graphic, physical, or otherwise, even if the acts do not involve conduct of a sexual nature.

**Sexual Assault** is any attempted or actual sexual act directed against another person, without consent, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent. Sexual assault is the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus, with a body part (e.g., finger, hand or penis), or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without consent of the complainant. This includes sexual assault of both males and females.

**Sexual Exploitation** is the touching of the private body parts (breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate part of a body) of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, without consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of their age or because of their temporary or permanent mental incapacity, or attempts to commit sexual assault. It also includes an act or acts attempted or committed by a person for sexual gratification, financial gain, or advancement through the abuse or exploitation of another person's sexuality. Examples include but are not limited to non-consensual touching, fondling, or kissing, nonconsensual voyeurism, non-consensual recording of sexual activity and or a person's intimate parts, non-consensual dissemination of such recordings, allowing others to view sexual activities without the consent of all of the participants, exposure of one's body in an indecent or lewd manner, sexual activity in public or semi-public places or exposing another person to a sexually transmitted infection or virus without the other's knowledge.

**Dating/Intimate-Partner Violence** and **Domestic Violence** is defined as any act of violence or threatened act of violence that occurs between individuals who are involved or have been involved in a sexual or other intimate relationship.

**Stalking** is defined as a course (more than once) of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for the person's safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress. Stalking includes the concept of cyber stalking—a particular form of stalking in which electronic media is used to pursue, harass, or to make repeated unwanted contact with another person in an unsolicited fashion. Stalking may involve persons who are known to one another or have an intimate or sexual relationship or may involve persons not known to one another.

# Resources and Support for Faculty and Students

**Confidential Resources:** An individual who desires confidentiality should contact one of the confidential resources/support services listed below. Information shared with a confidential resource does not have to be reported to the University, Title IX Coordinator or law enforcement for investigation unless the individual disclosing the confidential resources later chooses to engage those resources.

- **The University of Scranton Counseling Center (570) 941-7620**, located on the 6th floor O'Hara Hall, at the corner of Linden St. and Jefferson Ave., provides confidential counseling services to University students from Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm during the academic year. Upon request, the Counseling Center will provide counseling as well as referrals to agencies off-campus.
- **Student Health Services (570) 941-7667**, located at the corner of North Webster Avenue and Mulberry Street in the Roche Wellness Center provides confidential medical support and assistance to University students. During Fall, Winter, Intersession and Spring, Student Health Services is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Students must call for an appointment. For immediate medical assistance after hours or on weekends, call University Police at 570-941-7777.
- **Women's Resource Center of Lackawanna County (570) 346-4671** is a confidential, community-based agency serving those who have experienced sexual assault or other sexual misconduct. A counselor/advocate can be reached by phone 24 hours a day. Visit [wrcnepa.org](http://wrcnepa.org) to learn more.
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline (800-656-HOPE)** is a free, confidential national resource available 24 hours a day by calling or visiting [online.rainn.org](http://online.rainn.org).

**Private but NOT Confidential:** Matters will be handled with sensitivity and care in a private manner; however, the individuals in the offices listed below are required to report to the Title IX Coordinator.

- **Campus Ministries (570) 941-7419**, DeNaples Center, Suite 200, offers pastoral support.
- **The Jane Kopas Women's Center (570) 941-6194**, DeNaples Center, Suite 205 offers a safe and comfortable gathering place, resources, and referrals.
- **The Title IX Coordinator, and Deputy Title IX Coordinator, (570) 941-6645**, in the Office of Equity and Diversity, Institute of Molecular Biology and Medicine, Suite 315, here to discuss any questions regarding the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy, to assist in accessing resources and support services, and to facilitate the investigation and resolution of reports of conduct that may violate the SHSM Policy.
- **University Police (570) 941-7777**, level 2 of the Parking Pavilion, corner of Mulberry St. and Monroe Ave., helps to coordinate various resources including transporting a student to a hospital for medical care, assisting in obtaining a Protection from Abuse Order from the local court, and/or coordinating with appropriate legal authorities including the Lackawanna County District Attorney's Office and the Victim/Witness Unit.
- **The Dean of Students, (570) 941-7680**, DeNaples Student Center, Suite 201, offers support and resources, works with students experiencing crises or challenges, and empowers them to succeed inside and outside of the classroom.

# Facilitating Difficult Conversations in Class

## Keep in mind:

- **More than 90%** of sexual assault victims on college campuses choose not to report their experience to anyone.
- Students **may have lived through trauma or abuse** before ever arriving on campus and do not wish to discuss this after another assault.
- Some students are **impacted by sexual violence through the lived experiences** of family members and friends.
- **Some students simply don't feel they will be believed or heard.**

Knowing these realities, it is important to learn and talk about sexual violence in the college classroom.

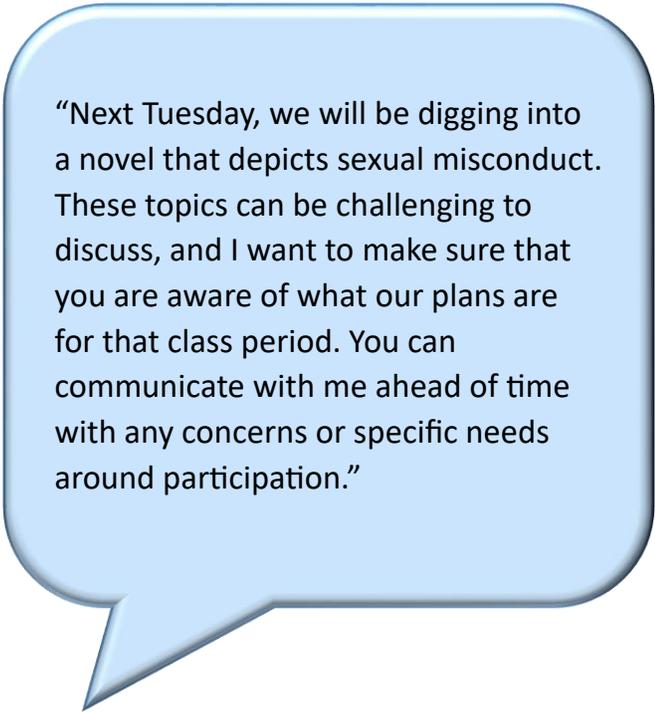
It is also imperative that faculty be intentional and well informed in discussing these difficult issues with students. Understanding more about trauma and survivors' needs can help faculty better support students' safety, wellbeing, and ability to participate as active members of the University learning community.



# Recommended Supportive Practices in the Classroom

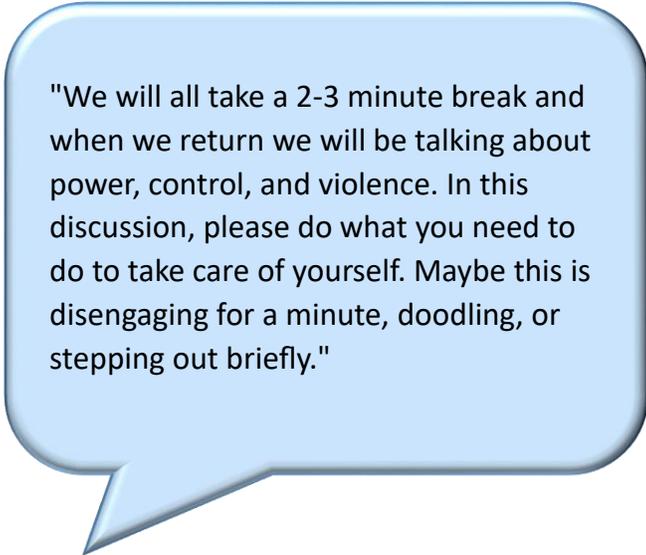
There are multiple topics surrounding sexual assault that may be difficult for students to discuss. If you know one of these topics will be coming up in your classroom, be prepared ahead of time. For example, create a class Google form for students to alert you about topics that may be sensitive or difficult for them, as well as what they need from you to be able to participate.

If a student tells you they are having difficulty with a topic or discussion, don't judge; simply ask how you can best support them. Give verbal and written notice (at the start of the term as well as the week or class period before) for any violence-related content or discussions. For example, say:



"Next Tuesday, we will be digging into a novel that depicts sexual misconduct. These topics can be challenging to discuss, and I want to make sure that you are aware of what our plans are for that class period. You can communicate with me ahead of time with any concerns or specific needs around participation."

Take short breaks before difficult activities or discussions, and allow students to stretch, get a drink, or use the restroom before regrouping as a class. This allows survivors to step out of the room without drawing attention to themselves or feeling forced to publicly identify themselves as a potential survivor. For example, say:



"We will all take a 2-3 minute break and when we return we will be talking about power, control, and violence. In this discussion, please do what you need to do to take care of yourself. Maybe this is disengaging for a minute, doodling, or stepping out briefly."

If you give students the option to "opt out" of a class period or discussion based on their emotional needs ... ensure that your attendance and participation policies in fact reflect and support this option. Make sure that students do not have to be concerned about being penalized for "opting out" in this way if they need to. Work to ensure all of your policies align with the options you provide to students.

# What To Do If a Student Discloses To You

- Listen without judgment. Listening is the single most important thing you can do. No one deserves to be the victim of violence, regardless of the circumstances.
- Avoid blaming the student for what occurred or asking questions that could imply fault, such as "Had you been drinking?" or "Why didn't you call the police?" or "What were you wearing?"
- Let the student know that what happened was not their fault and thank them for sharing with you. You do not need to repeat the explicit terms of the experience (e.g., rape, sexual assault, or exploitation); just say, "I'm sorry you experienced that" or "I'm sorry that happened to you. No one deserves to be treated that way."
- Thank them for telling someone & sharing with you. Acknowledge the act of disclosure and affirm that even telling someone about their experience takes strength and courage. Again, you do not need to repeat their language or story details back to them, but you can simply say, "thank you for sharing that with me."
- Tell them that you hear them & will support them. Victims of sexual violence are often met with disbelief when they decide to tell someone. Furthermore, their trust in someone they know (the person who committed the assault) has been broken. Remember that you are not an investigator tasked with asking questions. It is not your job to determine exactly what happened or who is responsible; instead, you are their trusted advisor. Let them know that you hear them and will support them.
- Refer the student to designated resources. You are not expected to be an expert on these issues; however, you can direct the person to the appropriate resources, either on campus or in the community. You can let the student know who the confidential resources are, and if appropriate, offer to walk them to the Counseling and Student Development Center to set up a counseling appointment. If the incident involved bodily harm, let them know where they can obtain medical attention.
- Support their decisions about how to proceed. Avoid giving advice or telling the student what they should do. You can encourage the student to report the incident and seek medical attention, while respecting that the final decision is theirs to make. For some individuals, making a report is not safe or "the right thing" to do. One of the most important things you can do is let a survivor take back the power they lost in the incident(s). It is critical that a survivor feels empowered to make their own decisions about what their options are, and when and how they will choose to pursue them.
- Submit a report to the Title IX Coordinator. All University employees who are not confidential resources must report information they have received about reported sexual violence to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator within 24 hours of learning about an incident. Information given to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator must include relevant details, including, if known: The name of the individual reporting the allegation of sexual misconduct. The name(s) of the person(s) accused of the sexual misconduct. Any other people involved in the incident. The date, time, and location of the incident (e.g. if it occurred on or off-campus).
- Follow up with the student after the disclosure. It can feel validating to the survivor when you let them know that you take their act of disclosure seriously and that you care about their wellbeing. For example, you could begin a follow-up conversation by saying, "I was thinking about the conversation we had the other day. Do you want to talk about how you are you doing? If not, that's okay too." Also respect their decision not to respond, and don't press the issue.
- Obtain information & support for yourself. Being exposed to issues related to sexual **violence** can be difficult and it is not unusual for first responders to experience vicarious trauma. It may help to discuss your experiences and feelings with a professional.