

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS OF CRIME

BY MICHELLE KUIPER



VALIDATION & EMPATHY

It is most important to make the survivor feel validated and show empathy

- *Make the survivor feel comfortable*
- *Be prepared to listen*
- *Console*
- *Empathize*
- *Believe*



PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW

**Give them as much information as you can
about the purpose of story**

- *Is it investigative?*
- *Trend?*
- *When will it appear?*
- *How long before it will appear?*
- *Where will it be placed?*



PREPARATION FOR INTERVIEW

Involve the survivor and give them choice

- *Involve the survivor in setting time and location for interview.*
- *Let them know how long the interview will take – cutting them short can cause deep hurt and you may lose their confidence in you.*
- *Give them the chance to bring someone with them for support.*
- *Allow them the power to withdraw their consent to participate in the story.*
- *Ask if they want to be named or photographed.*
- *Get to know advocates, ask for their advice in talking to the survivor. The survivor may even choose to have an advocate with them. You may even offer that idea to them.*
- *If you are interviewing minor, be super cautious and always have parent or guardian involved.*



DURING THE INTERVIEW

DO NOT

- *Over-emote. Gasping, wincing, etc. reinforces a notion that what they went through is shameful.*
- *Ask them to get so detailed they must relive the actual crime.*
- *Say you know what they are going through (unless you are a survivor).*
- *Become a counselor.*
- *Touch them without consent.*



DURING THE INTERVIEW

- *Be sympathetic to if they might need a break, more time to process or questions repeated.*
- *Ask questions like: Is it hard to describe this? Was it hard to tell others what happened? Avoid “why” questions that might imply they are to blame.*
- *Don't be surprised if accounts only make partial sense. Frequently survivors of sexual violence ‘shut down’ emotionally: their recall may become fragmentary, and in some cases they may even block out an event entirely. This is where you might see some an awakening happen.*
- *Ask them if they want to be referred to as a victim or survivor or it might be another term, but allow them choice in what they would like to be referenced.*



AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- *When the story is written, if possible, allow the survivor to look it over to make sure they are comfortable with the article, or at least read back to them any quotes. This will also build trust for future stories and allow for any mistakes to be corrected.*
- *Check in with survivor on how he or she felt after the article ran.*
 - *Did they have any questions?*
 - *Is there something that you, the writer, could have done.*
- *Remind the interviewee of where you can be reached and your superior, in case you move from that position.*
- *The survivor is in control of their truth no matter if they shared what most people call “their story” ... they can share all of it, some of it or none of it.... no matter how many times they have shared it before.*

