

Responding to People in Need

Listen:

Practice active listening. Don't try to 'fix' the situation. Often people just need to know they've been heard.

Validate:

- "That must be very hard."
- "You are a strong person."
- "I can't imagine how difficult this is."
- "I'm sorry you (your child) were hurt in that way."
- "Thank you for trusting me with such a personal and private experience."
- "You deserve help in dealing with something so difficult. Do you have resources?"

Normalize:

- "Parenting can be very frustrating."
- "Two is a difficult age."
- "Teenagers can be hard!"

Assist:

- Use grounding techniques if the person seems to be disconnected or in distress and be sure to keep yourself grounded. Examples include: Offer gum, candy, chocolate, take deep breaths and ask them to take deep breaths, put lotion on your hands / offer lotion to them (engage senses, be present)
- Restore a sense of control to the person by reminding her/him that they have choice and there are helpful people/organizations that can walk with them on their journey.
- "I'm not a trained counselor, but I know of some resources that may be helpful to you"... (information on table, books, contacts below)

Avoid Retraumatization:

- Avoid positioning yourself between the person and the exit door.
- Ask what you can do to make the interview process more comfortable.
- Ask permission if you touch the person.
- Use grounding techniques if the person seems to be disconnected or in distress. Examples include:
 - calmly remind the person where they are, that they are safe, and that the abuse is not currently happening
 - ask the person to redirect her attention to the environment and to describe what she sees in detail
 - ask the person to stomp her feet and push her body into the chair
- Restore a sense of control to the person by providing her/him with as much choice as possible