DAY05·SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2026

05 YOUR FIRST RESPONSE MATTERS.



If someone tells you they're experiencing abuse, you don't need a perfect speech. How you respond can shape whether they feel safe reaching out again.

UNDERSTANDING THE TOPIC

A disclosure is when someone shares an experience of abuse. It may come out slowly or indirectly. Your role isn't to fix the situation or decide what happens next. It's to listen, believe them and help them think about options—if they want to.

Avoid demanding details, telling them what to do or confronting the person causing harm. They understand their own safety best.

Be honest about privacy. Don't promise secrecy you can't keep: some roles carry duties to report, especially where a child may be at risk. If that applies to you, say so early.

THINGS YOU CAN SAY

- "Thank you for telling me."
- "This is not your fault."
- "What would feel helpful right now?"
- "You don't have to decide anything today."

ONE PRACTICAL ACTION

PRACTISE ONE SUPPORTIVE SENTENCE.

Choose one phrase above and say it out loud so it's ready when you need it. For guidance on supporting someone, friends and family can also call the Assaulted Women's Helpline.

KEY TAKEAWAY — **Listen without taking over.**

LEARN MORE

Assaulted Women's Helpline
awhl.org

NEED SUPPORT?

You don't have to work out next steps alone.
Women's Habitat 24-hour crisis line: 416-252-5829
Assaulted Women's Helpline (24/7): 1-866-863-0511 · #SAFE (#7233) on a Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus mobile
In immediate danger, call 911.