

Sexual Assault Awareness

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). With the recent **#metoo** movement and the number of high-profile workplace sexual harassment cases (including several within our own state institutions), SAAM is an opportunity for all of us to think about how our own actions can support survivors of sexual violence and prevent sexual violence—both at work and in our communities.

How your Words Affect Others

- Chances are someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence. They might not have told anyone out of fear of being blamed or judged.
 - If someone in your life is considering sharing something personal with you, they are likely listening to your opinions or attitudes for clues on how you will respond.
 - A comment or joke based on assumptions or stereotypes might not seem like a big deal, but it could make someone feel unsafe about sharing personal or painful things with you.
- ⇒ For example: “I could never tell her what happened to me. She said if victims of sexual assault don’t go to the police, then it wasn’t serious.”

You Can Become an Agent of Change

- Our words shape the world around us.
- Whether you are showing your support for a survivor or helping someone better understand these issues, your voice is powerful and necessary in this conversation.

Material provided by and adapted from:

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)

What Can You Do?

- Don’t wait for a critical moment to say the right things. The words you choose every day communicate your values.
 - When you hear comments that blame victims or make light of sexual violence, speak up so others know you don’t agree. Even if you don’t have a perfect response, this shows you do not believe in stereotypes, you believe survivors, and you’re a safe person to talk to.
- ⇒ For example: “That commercial made me uncomfortable. I don’t know exactly why, but I think everyone should be treated with respect.” or, “I don’t think that’s true — I believe people when they say that someone has hurt them.”

What Help is Available?

When someone experiences sexual assault, the impact can be felt in all aspects of one’s life, often making it difficult to concentrate or feel safe at work.

[Community Sexual Assault Programs](#) across the state offer free and confidential help including 24/7 crisis support, accompaniment to medical exams after an assault, and safety planning. The **WA State EAP** is a compassionate resource to help address these concerns and offers you free and confidential short-term counseling and referrals to ongoing resources for your wellbeing.