



Overview

Summary

People with IDD are three to five times more likely to be sexually assaulted than people without disabilities. Some estimates even say that 90% of people with IDD will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime. This means that if you know or work with people with IDD, you probably know one or more survivors. Many survivors have reported their assault. Many have not. All need support in their recovery. Recovery can look different for all survivors. It might include:

- Talking to others about what happened. Survivors might need to build self-advocacy skills to share what happened. They also need others to listen to and believe them.
- Being gentle with themselves. Survivors might need to take time to process what happened to them. They need to know that over time, they will heal.
- Engaging in a creative activity. Sometimes, it is easier to express pain through writing, art, or music than through words.

You can use this toolkit in many ways.

- You can self-pace through its contents to learn on your own.
- Teams can work together in person or remotely for staff development.
- You can share the videos and activities with the self-advocates you work with.



Recovery Toolkit

Vocabulary

Share these words, pictures, and definitions before you begin working with others. Make sure everyone understands what they mean. Revisit the vocabulary before you start each module.

Word	Picture	Definition
Recovery	A clock face with a heart containing a red cross at the 12 o'clock position and an arrow pointing clockwise, symbolizing the process of healing over time.	Healing from harm. Over time, your body and mind get better. You don't forget what happened. But you feel less scared and alone.
Self-Advocacy	A stick figure giving a thumbs up, with three thought bubbles above their head containing a smiley face, a hand pointing up, and a lightbulb, representing self-advocacy and confidence.	Building skills to speak up for yourself. You become more confident. You learn to ask for what you need.
Survivor	A stick figure giving a thumbs up, with a large, stylized sun behind their head, symbolizing a survivor and hope.	A person who was sexually assaulted. They are working to heal their bodies and their minds. They need support to do that.

Symbols used/adapted from: arasaac.org, thenounproject.com



Trauma-Informed Approach

Many people with IDD are sexual assault survivors. Some people don't want others to know. Some do. Some don't realize they are survivors until they start talking about it. Some survivors are triggered when they talk about sexuality and sexual assault. They relive their trauma. This can be very painful. It can happen unexpectedly.

Talking honestly about sexuality and sexual assault is important. It's also important to keep everyone safe and supported. Use these guidelines when you talk about sexuality and sexual assault.

Plan Ahead

- Read these guidelines. Share them with people who will join the discussion.
- Have a safe space ready. That could be a Zoom breakout room. It could be a room or outside space where you are talking. Let people know where it is. Tell them they can use it whenever they need to. They do not need to ask for permission.

Watch for Triggers

- Watch faces and bodies. You might see signs of anger, fear, or sadness.
- A person might start fidgeting. They might get up and try to leave. They might rock or hug their arms to themselves.
- Sometimes, you can't tell at all from the outside.

Give Support

- You might see someone struggling. Ask if they need a break.
- Someone might share something personal or upsetting. Use words of comfort and support:



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“I believe you.”

“You are brave to share this.”

“It is not your fault.”

“I care about you.”

“I’m sorry this happened to you.”

“I am here to help.”

Follow Up

- Check in after the discussion. Check in more than once.
- Share good resources like:
 - National Sexual Assault Hotline:

800.656.HOPE (4673)

[RAINN Online Hotline-English](https://hotline.rainn.org) (https://hotline.rainn.org)

[RAINN Online Hotline-Spanish](https://hotline.rainn.org/es) (https://hotline.rainn.org/es)
 - Your local rape crisis center. [Find a list at RAINN](https://centers.rainn.org) (https://centers.rainn.org).
 - Some self-care activities. [Find some at RAINN](https://rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma) (https://rainn.org/articles/self-care-after-trauma)



Pacing

There are three modules in the Recovery Toolkit. We recommend exploring these resources in three 30-minute sessions.

Session 1: Talking About Sexual Assault

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Role-Play, 20 min.

Session 2: Self-Care in Recovery

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Discussion Guide, 20 min.

Session 3: Recovery Activities

1. Preview the Video, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Use the Checklist, 20 min.



Talking About Sexual Assault

Preview

Talking about a sexual assault is an important step in recovery. Sharing the story helps survivors feel heard. It helps start the healing process. The right time to talk about an assault is when the survivor feels ready. No one should feel pressured to talk before they are comfortable.

If someone chooses to share their story with you, being a good listener is important. You can help them feel safe by believing what they say. Do not judge them. Do not ask for details about what happened. Instead, be supportive and kind. Use positive words like:

- I believe you.
- It is not your fault.
- I'm sorry this happened to you.
- I am here to help.

Talking about an assault can be hard. It can also be a way to start feeling better. Remember, everyone heals at their own pace. Support from others can make a big difference.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Talking About Sexual Assault](https://youtu.be/wS7rVhQtWyA?si=tV5jlrE0Wq8PXe6g) on YouTube.
(<https://youtu.be/wS7rVhQtWyA?si=tV5jlrE0Wq8PXe6g>)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Role-Play

Work through the role-plays.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the situations and questions.
- If you are working in a group:
 - Read the role-play aloud if helpful.
 - Do the role-play several times with different volunteers.
 - Then discuss the questions.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
- Walk away or leave the group.
- Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.

Role-Play 1: Telling a Friend About an Assault

Friend: Hey, do you want to see that new movie this weekend?

Person 1: I don't really go to the movies anymore.

Friend: Oh, why not?

Person 1: A while ago, someone touched me in a dark movie theater. It really scared me. Now I feel afraid when I think about going to the movies.

Friend: I'm really sorry that happened to you. You didn't deserve that. Thank you for telling me.

Person 1: It just makes me feel uncomfortable, and I don't think I can enjoy movies like I used to.



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Friend: I understand. You are brave for sharing this with me. Let's go for a walk in the park and get ice cream instead.

Person 1: I'd really like that. Thanks for understanding.

Friend: Anytime. I want you to feel safe and relaxed when we hang out.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you think Person 1 felt about sharing this experience?
- What words of support did the friend use when the person shared their fear?
- Imagine Person 1 did not want to explain why they were afraid. Should the friend have asked for more details? Why or why not?
- Why was it helpful that the friend suggested doing something else?
- How can you support someone who shares a bad experience with you?

Role-Play 2: Afraid to Be Alone in the Car with a Caregiver

Caregiver: Are you ready to head out? We'll take the car and go to the park.

Person 1: I don't know... I'm afraid to be alone in the car with you.

Caregiver: Why?

Person 1: A while ago, another caregiver touched me inappropriately in a car. Now, I don't feel safe when I'm in a car alone with anyone.

Caregiver: I'm so sorry that happened to you. It was not your fault. You should always feel safe.

Person 1: I still feel scared.

Caregiver: I understand. Would it help if you sat in the backseat? Or we could walk instead.



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Person 1: Let's walk.

Caregiver: I'm glad you shared this with me. You deserve to feel safe. Let's do whatever makes you most comfortable.

Person 1: Thank you. I feel a little better now.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you think the person felt before telling the caregiver about their fear?
- What words did the caregiver use to show their support?
- How did having choices help the person feel more comfortable?
- What should we do when someone shares a difficult experience?
- How can caregivers build trust with the people they support?



Self-Care in Recovery

Preview

The last session covered talking about past assaults. Sharing what happened can help survivors heal. The people in their lives can support them. Survivors feel seen and heard. This builds safer, stronger relationships.

In this session, we will talk about self-care during recovery. Survivors can feel angry or overwhelmed. This is often true when they are reminded of what happened. This is natural. Survivors should know that these feelings are OK. But blaming yourself will not help you heal. Instead, survivors can learn from each other that life can get better. Self-care can lead to better days. They may even find new opportunities as they take control of their recovery.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Self Care](https://youtu.be/FJoT0TUqUIw?si=OD5Q_ikjTTeBtt2R) on YouTube.
(https://youtu.be/FJoT0TUqUIw?si=OD5Q_ikjTTeBtt2R)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Discussion Guide

Work through the discussion questions.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the questions.
- If you are working in a group, discuss them with your peers or the self-advocates you are working with.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
 - Walk away or leave the group.
 - Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.
1. How might a survivor be reminded of what happened to them?
 - Do you have bad memories that come back to you?
 - Are there sights, smells, sounds, or other things that bring back the memories?
 - How might seeing or hearing about other assaults make someone feel angry or upset?
 - How can a survivor prepare for these moments when something reminds them of the past?
 2. Why do some survivors blame themselves for what happened?
 - Have you ever blamed yourself for something that happened that was not really your fault?
 - Why is it common for survivors to think the assault was their fault?
 - How can self-blame affect how a person feels about themselves?
 - Why is it important to remind survivors that what happened was not their fault?



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3. What can survivors do to believe better days are ahead?
 - How can focusing on the future help survivors feel more hopeful?
 - How can taking small steps forward help survivors regain control and confidence?
4. What are some ways you take care of yourself when something upsetting happens?
 - What helps you feel better when you're angry or stressed?
 - How can doing things you enjoy, like hobbies or spending time with friends, help?
 - Why is it important to be gentle with yourself during tough times?



Recovery Activities

Preview

In the last session, we talked about self-care. It is important for survivors to be gentle with themselves. They should try not to blame themselves for what happened. Instead, they should try to find positive ways to see a brighter future.

In this session, we will explore activities that can help with recovery. Everyone is different. What works for one person might not work for another. By exploring many tools and strategies, survivors can find the ones that are right for them. They can use these strategies to handle fear and stress caused by their assault.

Before you watch the video, review the vocabulary list.

Watch the Video

- Watch [Recovery Activities](https://youtu.be/aW76fR4K2jY?si=LEj7-myE9My1AeNt) on YouTube.
(<https://youtu.be/aW76fR4K2jY?si=LEj7-myE9My1AeNt>)
- Remember to use the trauma-informed approach described previously.



Use the Checklist

Work through the checklist.

- If you are working alone, reflect on the checklist items.
- If you are working in a group, discuss them with your peers or the self-advocates you are working with.

Remember to watch for signs of past trauma. Remind participants that it's OK to:

- Take a break.
- Walk away or leave the group.
- Ask to talk with someone privately about what they are feeling.

Recovery Activities Checklist

1. Do Something Creative

- ✓ Write about your feelings. Write in a journal or on social media. If you cannot write or type, use speech-to-text.
- ✓ Use music to express your feelings. Play or sing music that tells how you feel. Listen to music that helps you feel good when you are angry or afraid.
- ✓ Use art to express your feelings. You don't need words to create art. You don't need special tools. Let the colors, patterns, and textures say how you feel.

2. Use a Hobby

- ✓ Focus on a favorite hobby like painting, knitting, or cooking. Doing something you enjoy can be calming.



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- ✓ Learn a new hobby or skill. It can give you a fresh way to express yourself. It can focus your mind.
- ✓ Set goals in your hobby. Reaching even a small goal can help you feel more in control.

3. Take Care of Your Body and Mind

- ✓ Meditate. It can help you stay grounded when you feel stressed.
- ✓ Try breathing exercises. They can help calm you down quickly.
- ✓ Exercise in a way that feels good. Try walking, dancing, or yoga. Moving your body can help you de-stress.
- ✓ Rest. Take time to relax, sleep, and heal.
- ✓ Use positive self-talk. Say aloud all the great things about you. Replace negative, self-blaming thoughts with gentle ones.

4. Talk About It

- ✓ Talk with trusted friends and family members. Ask them to check in with you from time to time.
- ✓ Find a local support group. This could include people with IDD. It could include people without disabilities who are survivors.
- ✓ Get help from a mental health counselor. Try to find one that works with people with IDD. They should also have experience with sexual assault recovery.

5. Become an Advocate

- ✓ Share your story when you feel ready. Your experience may help others heal.



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- ✓ Support other survivors. Join groups that help prevent sexual assault or support those recovering from it. Set healthy boundaries for yourself. Do not over-extend yourself.
- ✓ Teach others. Teach people about consent, boundaries, and how to support survivors.



For More Information

Visit [Seen and Heard: IDD Community](https://www.youtube.com/@SeenHeardIDD)

(<https://www.youtube.com/@SeenHeardIDD>) on YouTube. You will find more videos about this topic. You will find videos about related topics.

Credit

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