



## Overview

### Summary

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are harmed by sexual assault more often than others. They are usually harmed by someone they know. This can include family members and other people with IDD. It can include support staff. If you know 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 everyone. It might include:

- Talking to others about what happened. This includes building self-advocacy skills to share what happened. Others need to listen to and believe survivors.
- Being gentle with themselves. Survivors need time to process what happened to them. They need to know that over time, they will heal.
- Doing something creative. Sometimes, it is easier to express pain through writing, art, or music than through words.

You can use this toolkit in many ways.

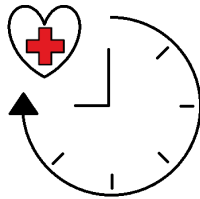

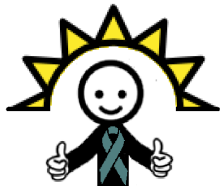
- You learn on your own.
- You can learn with your family or others who support you.
- You can learn with other self-advocates.



# Recovery Toolkit

## Vocabulary

This is a list of words we use in the toolkit. Read it before you start working the activities. If you don't understand one or more of the words, ask someone you trust for help. If you're working in a group, talk about each word together.

Word	Picture	Definition
Recovery		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		Building skills to speak up for yourself. You become more confident. You learn to ask for what you need.
Survivor		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](http://arasaac.org), [thenounproject.com](http://thenounproject.com)*



## Staying Safe & Healthy

Many people with IDD have been harmed by sexual assault. Some don't want others to know. Some do. Some don't realize it happened to them until they start talking about it. Some survivors get upset when they hear and talk about sexuality. They relive the bad things that happened to them. This can be painful. It can happen suddenly.

It's important to talk about sexuality. It's also important to keep everyone safe and healthy. Use these rules when you work on this toolkit.

## Plan Ahead

- Read these rules. Share them with people you work with on this toolkit.
- Have a safe space ready. That could be a Zoom breakout room. It could be a place away from where you are talking. Tell people where it is. Tell them they can use it whenever they need. They do not need to ask permission.

## Watch for Triggers

- A trigger is something that makes a person remember past harm. You can sometimes see when this happens.
- Watch faces and bodies. You may see signs of anger, fear, or sadness.
- A person may fidget. They may get up and try to leave. They may 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. It might be upsetting. Don't judge. Instead, use words of support:

"I believe you."

"You are brave to share this."



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“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 you work on the toolkit. 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)



## Schedule

There are three modules in the Safe Boundaries Toolkit. You don't have to do them all at once. You can do them in three 30-minute blocks.

### Block 1: Talking About Sexual Assault

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

### Block 2: Self-Care in Recovery

1. Think Ahead, 5 min.
2. Watch the Video, 5 min.
3. Talk About It, 20 min.

### Block 3: Recovery Activities

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



## Talking About Sexual Assault

### Think Ahead

Talking about a sexual assault can help recovery. Sharing the story helps survivors feel heard. It starts 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 ready.

Someone might choose 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, read the vocabulary list. Talk about any confusing words.

### Watch the Video

- Watch [Talking About Sexual Assault](https://youtu.be/wS7rVhQtWyA?si=tV5jlrE0Wq8PXe6g) on YouTube.  
(<https://youtu.be/wS7rVhQtWyA?si=tV5jlrE0Wq8PXe6g>)
- Remember to follow the rules for staying safe and healthy.



## Use the Role-Play

### ***Role-Play 1: Telling a Friend About an Assault***

Read the role play out loud. Do the role-play with different volunteers. Then answer the questions.

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.

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 what happened to them?
- What words of support did the friend use?



- What if Person 1 did not want to tell 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***

Read the role play out loud. Do the role-play with different volunteers. Then answer the questions.

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, a caregiver touched me when I was in their 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.

Person 1: Let's walk.

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

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





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### Discussion Questions:

- How do you think the person felt before telling 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 hard experience?
- How can caregivers build trust with the people they support?



## Self-Care in Recovery

### Preview

The last part of the toolkit talked about past assaults. Sharing what happened can help survivors heal. They can get support. Survivors feel seen and heard. This builds safer, stronger relationships.

In this part, we will talk about self-care. Survivors can feel angry or overwhelmed. This happens when they remember what happened. This is natural. Survivors should know that these feelings are OK. 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 work on recovery.

Before you watch the video, read the vocabulary list. Talk about any confusing words.

### Watch the Video

- Watch [Self Care](https://youtu.be/FJoT0TUqUIw?si=OD5Q_ikjTTeBtt2R) on YouTube.  
([https://youtu.be/FJoT0TUqUIw?si=OD5Q\\_ikjTTeBtt2R](https://youtu.be/FJoT0TUqUIw?si=OD5Q_ikjTTeBtt2R))
- Remember to follow the rules for staying safe and healthy.



## Talk About It

Think and talk about the questions below. Watch for signs of past harm.

Remind everyone 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. What might make a survivor remember what happened to them?
  - Do you have bad memories that come back to you?
  - What sights, sounds, or other things bring back the memories?
  - What if a survivor heard about other assaults? How might that make them feel?
  - How can a survivor be ready to handle these bad memories?
2. Why do some survivors blame themselves?
  - Have you ever blamed yourself for something that was not your fault?
  - Why might survivors think the assault was their fault?
  - How can self-blame make someone feel bad about themselves?
  - Why should we remind people that what happened was not their fault?
3. What can survivors do to see that better days are ahead?
  - How can thinking about the future help them feel hopeful?
  - How can taking small steps forward help them feel more in control?
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 help?
  - Why should you be gentle with yourself during tough times?



## Recovery Activities

### Think Ahead

In the last part of the toolkit, we talked about self-care. Survivors should be gentle with themselves. What happened was not their fault. They should try not to blame themselves. Instead, they can imagine a bright future. They do things that bring them joy.

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

Before you watch the video, read the vocabulary list. Talk about any confusing words.

### Watch the Video

- Watch [Recovery Activities](https://youtu.be/aW76fR4K2jY?si=LEj7-myE9My1AeNt) on YouTube.  
(<https://youtu.be/aW76fR4K2jY?si=LEj7-myE9My1AeNt>)
- Remember to follow the rules for staying safe and healthy.



## Use the Checklist

The checklist gives ideas for recovery. Read each item. If you are working alone, think about it. If you are working in a group, talk about it.

- Why might this help?
- Is this something you already do?
- Can you think of other ideas?

Watch for signs of past harm. Remind everyone 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 feel better 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 self-blaming thoughts with gentle ones.

### 4. Talk About It

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

### 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. Join groups that support survivors. Set healthy boundaries. Do not try to do too much.
- ✓ 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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