

Suggestions for family and friends

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Ways to demonstrate your caring and support



Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program

William S. Middleton VA Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace
Madison, WI 53705
608-280-7084

*It sometimes feels like
I can never do the
right thing.*

- ◆ The fact that you've remained involved in this person's life is a good sign.
- ◆ Positive support can increase people's healing and growth.

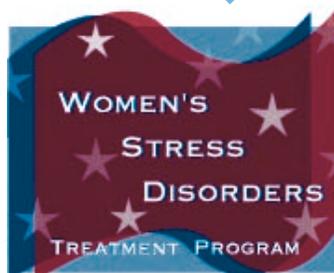


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Don't push for details of the trauma

- It is possible for people to heal without talking about the trauma to everyone.
- If she wants to talk about it and you feel able to listen at that moment, that is fine.
- You can be supportive without catastrophizing her experience.

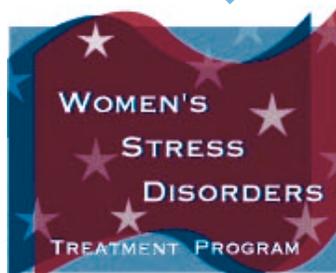


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What seems to be helpful?

- Believe her. Most of us hate to believe anything like this could happen. Assume her feelings about this are true and make sense to her.
- Communicate to her your belief that this never should have happened and that it was not her fault.
- Support her in making life-affirming choices such as eating right, ending abusive relationships or engaging in treatment.

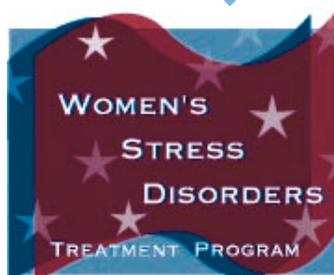


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What else is helpful?

- Learn about the possible consequences of exposure to a severe stressor (e.g. , PTSD, Panic Disorder, Depression).
- Encourage your loved one to stick with treatment.
- Consider family counseling.

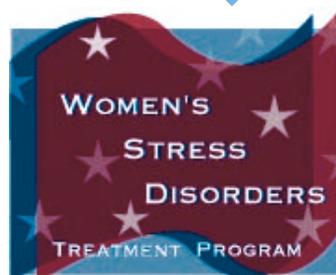


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Guidelines for listening

- ◆ This is a different kind of listening than most people usually do. This is “don’t just do something - sit there”. It’s the opposite of our habit.
- ◆ Listen for the deep meaning. The feelings are generally more the point than the details of the stress .
- ◆ Make it clear you are not trying to change her feelings or hurry her up to get over them.

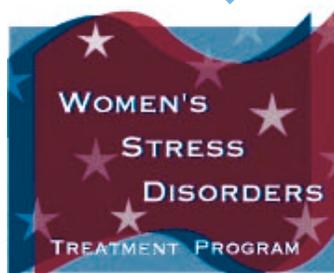


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*I know she is really upset,
but what about how
it feels to me?*

- Trauma leaves a wide wake. When you allow yourself to empathize with a survivor of trauma, your world view may be affected and you may experience some distress.
- It is important that those who care for someone who is struggling with this issue take good care of themselves.



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How can I take care of myself?

- Get enough rest and exercise.
- Eat a good diet and be moderate in your use of alcohol, sugar and caffeine.
- Share the responsibility for caring for this person. If you are burned out you will not be very helpful to your loved one anyway.
- Spend time with friends who are healthy.



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