

29 Townsend Place
Kirkcaldy
Fife
KY1 1HB
01592 642336

2a Burnside North
Cupar
Fife
KY15 4DG
01334 655205

Email: info@frasac.org.uk
Website: www.frasac.org.uk

Opening Times:
Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm

Further information & advice:

M-Power: 0808 808 4321
(Thursday evenings 8pm-10pm)
www.male-rape.org.uk

Survivors UK: 0845 122 1201
(open 7pm-10pm Mon, Tues & Thurs)

Rape & Abuse Line:
0808 8000 122—men answer 7-10pm
0808 8000 123—women answer 7-10pm

Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87
(open 6pm-2am)

Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org



**Fife Rape & Sexual
Assault Centre

(FRASAC)**

**The Survivor's
Self-Help Guide**



**For Men Who Have
Been Raped Or
Sexually Assaulted**

Self Help

The aim of this guide is to show people who have experienced male rape and/or sexual assault, that you are not alone. The advice, suggestions and information given comes mostly from other Survivors.

We aren't saying that all you need to cope with crisis is in this guide! We encourage you to get support and to reach out to the people you trust most.

This guide will rarely give direct advice as FRASAC strongly believe that **YOU** should be in charge of your recovery and this holds true even in a crisis.

This guide is designed so that you can go through the subjects and dip into the parts you find most useful.

Coping With Crisis

Crisis can hit at many points whilst you're dealing with and recovering from rape or sexual assault. It can hit when:

- * You begin to realise what has happened to you.
- * You start getting flashbacks about what happened.
- * You begin to talk about what happened and it begins to "hit home" how much you've been hurt.
- * You start to get memories you didn't know were there.
- * Other things go wrong in your life like relationship break-ups, financial difficulties, or problems at work.
- * Things remind you of the assault, like having contact with the perpetrator, the death of the perpetrator, or significant anniversaries.
- * Something violent happens, such as witnessing an assault on someone else. This is frightening in itself and can also be a powerful reminder.

Crisis can be a particular feature of the early stages of dealing with the trauma. It can feel at this point that everything is in chaos. Crisis, however, is not confined to this stage. Along the way a crisis can be triggered by some of the events described above. Sometimes things can seem to get worse before they get better as the full extent of the hurt suffered becomes clearer. There is no particular time limit to a crisis. It can be short and dramatic or last for a long time.

Getting Support In A Crisis (continued)

◆ Professional Helpers

There are a number of different types of professional helpers:

- * Counsellors and Psychotherapists
- * GP's
- * Psychiatrists
- * Social Workers
- * Community Psychiatric Nurses

One question you may be asking is "should I get individual counselling/therapy?" A good counsellor or therapist can be a great help in your recovery. Some survivors have found them a life-line. Others manage OK without them. Whatever your view, remember that they are just people and should show the same or similar qualities of a supportive person mentioned previously. In addition you may want to check out the following:

- * Has the individual ever worked with survivors of sexual assault and/or rape?
- * Have they worked with male rape/sexual assault survivors?
- * What training have they had?
- * To whom are they accountable e.g. a supervisor or professional body?

This may help you decide whether you think the individual is competent and has relevant knowledge and experience. In terms of dealing with a crisis you may want to ask:

- * Do you offer emergency sessions?
- * Can you be contacted out of hours in a crisis?

This will give you some idea about the level of support you can expect from them.

Supportive people are an important part of your crisis team, but there are other things too. Consider if any of the following might be beneficial:

- * Watching TV, jogging, listening to music or playing games etc.
- * Sometimes people have good luck charms or objects associated with good times.
- * Pets can also be a source of comfort. A loving cat or dog can give a lot of support and acceptance and may even sense that you're having a painful time.

Remember the survivor is the expert and he knows his needs better than anyone.

Getting Support In A Crisis (continued)

Did they react with understanding and support? If you haven't told them yet, how do you think they would react if you did? How have they reacted when you've shared personal things in the past?

If you've told your partner already and they are supportive, you could consider the following options:

- * Tell them you're in crisis and need their support.
- * Ask your partner for what you need. Remember that they will have their own needs too and will probably not be available 24 hours a day. Try to arrange with them a level of support elsewhere as well.
- * Be clear with them about anything you're not prepared to negotiate. If sex is out of the question for the moment tell them that. If there are some places you can't go, or things you can't do—because it's too painful—let them know.

If you haven't told your partner yet but you think they have the qualities to make a good supporter:

- * Seriously consider telling them
- * Ask them for some practical support

Be kind to yourself and take good care of your emotional and physical well-being.

◆ **Friends And Family**

Most of the options mentioned for partners are equally relevant when choosing which friends to include as part of your Support Team. When asking them for help you could consider whether they would be prepared to:

- * Receive phone calls when you are distressed, including at night.
- * Listen if you need to talk about what you are feeling.
- * Accompany you when you need support, to GP's appointments, shopping, etc.

Like your partner, friends will have their personal needs too. So some negotiation will have to take place about what they feel they can offer.

You may think that all this asking for help sounds very weak and that as a man you should be able to cope.

Try to remember:

- * It is a sign of courage not weakness. You don't have to ask everyone for help. To help you through times of crises choose one or two special people who you are close to and trust.

What Happens In A Crisis?

It's hard to imagine it going away and it's hard to see a way through it.

You may feel:

- * Reality is distorted.
- * You and your life are totally disorganised.
- * You can't cope with things as you usually can.
- * Tense and panicky most of the time and prone to mood swings.
- * Numb and emotionally empty.
- * That you're not safe.
- * You may notice that one or more parts of your life are not working as you would like and people around you have commented upon this.

When there's a crisis there's usually a feeling of being vulnerable. A threat may be obvious and physical such as the environment you're in not being particularly safe. Or it may be more subtle—as if your inner sense of yourself as a person and as a man is under attack. You may feel that you can't cope with the feeling of threat.

Being raped or sexually assaulted can trigger a number of threats for you as a man.

Starting to get flashbacks can leave you feeling vulnerable. Men are usually brought up to think of themselves as "strong". It can be a shock to think that this could have happened to you.

If you're having a lot of distress you may start to feel out of control. Feeling out of control can be very frightening.

You may feel confused sexually. If you're "straight" you may wonder if what happened makes you "less than a man". If you are gay you may wonder if you "asked for it". All of this is very unsettling and may threaten the way you see yourself sexually.

If you're currently in a dangerous situation or have suffered a recent assault you might be thinking, "why can't I cope with this? I should be able to." Again, this threatens your overall sense of safety.

What To Do In A Crisis?

Over the next few pages we'll look in detail at coping with crises. To help with this you could use the image of building foundations. The aim is to build a solid foundation on which you can build. And as you do you start to feel more in control, happier and more fulfilled. The pain gets less. It will be a difficult task at times, but one that has been completed many times by many survivors.

Building the foundations for recovery means:

- * Staying alive
- * Getting Support
- * Keeping yourself safe
- * Establishing control over distress.
- * Beginning to feel your feelings.

The foundations are just images. If it doesn't suit you then you could imagine your own safe image. It might be house or a room or a plane—absolutely anything that will help you feel safe, protected and able to survive the hard times until better times come.

Getting Support In A Crisis

Why is getting support so important?

There are many reasons:

- * Two features of a crisis are a sense of threat and a feeling of not coping. You need some support to help you.
- * Any support you build now will stand you in good stead throughout the journey. Even when you're not in crisis, getting support is an essential part of recovery.
- * Men often feel they have to "go it alone", even in the most challenging situations.
- * It's hard to recover from what happened without reaching out for some extra help. This is never more true than in a crisis.

Getting Support In A Crisis (continued)

So what exactly is this support? In many ways support means people. But not just any people. These are people with very particular qualities, who:

- * Listen to your feelings
- * Accept and respect you
- * Are reliable
- * Are trustworthy
- * Keep your confidences
- * Believe you
- * Don't "play down" what happened to you.
- * Never blame you for what happened

Basically, you need a Support Team to help you. They may be found in your immediate social circle (partner, family, friends) from professional helpers (therapists, counsellors, other professionals, voluntary organisations) or from other Survivors. Members of your Support Team don't have to be highly qualified with lots of letters after their name. Nor do they always do "professional" things. For instance a supportive person might:

- * Come round for a chat
- * Listen
- * Tell you they care about you
- * Allow you to let off steam by crying or shouting

It's worth going through the people you are involved with, whether personally or professionally and deciding whether you think they have the qualities mentioned above. If they don't then they may not be the most appropriately supportive people to have around if you're going through a crisis.

In choosing your Support Team here are some issues to consider:

◆ **Your Partner**

If you're in a serious relationship you may need to weigh up how supportive your partner is. Clearly an understanding partner could provide vital support in a crisis. Does he or she have the qualities mentioned above?

Have you told them about the assault and what you're going through?