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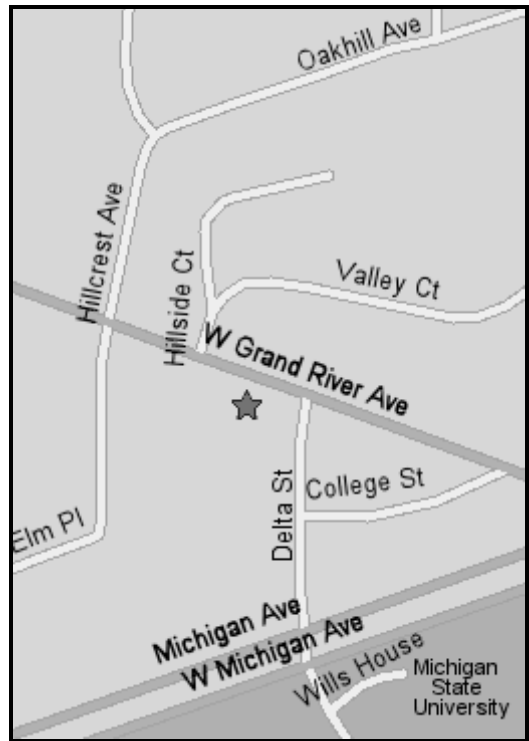
Name _____
Street _____
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Please mail this sheet to:

The Listening Ear, Attn: SAC
313 West Grand River Ave.
East Lansing, MI 48823-4213

"If a Friend Tells You They Were Raped" is a publication of The Listening Ear. It may be freely redistributed so long as the content remains unchanged.

The Listening Ear is a non-profit crisis center located in East Lansing, Michigan. We have served the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year without interruption since 1969.



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*Sexual
Assault
Counseling*

**If a Friend Tells
You They Were
Raped**

The Listening Ear
313 West Grand River
East Lansing, MI 48823-4213

(517) 337-1717

24-hour Crisis Center

Rape is frightening to talk about. It becomes more frightening when you're listening to a friend talk about being raped. As you listen, it's normal to feel scared, helpless, or angry. You may find that *you* want to talk to someone after you finish listening to your friend. Something you might try is contacting the Listening Ear or another sexual assault hotline to talk about your own reactions. As you listen, here are some things to remember.

Listen and Don't Judge

It takes a great deal of trust for someone to talk about being raped. You may be the first person they've told. They may be afraid of being blamed, or that you'll tell other people what happened to them. Respect the risk your friend is taking by being supportive, and listening.

The best and most important thing you can do is simply let them talk. Don't try to tell them what they should have done or how they can get over it. There is no right way to cope with rape, and every rape survivor does what they need to do in order to survive a traumatic experience. Nobody else can second-guess those choices. What you can do is be there to support your friend as they deal with the effects of that trauma.

Let Them Know it Wasn't Their Fault

A nearly universal response to rape is for victims to blame themselves. Rape is the fault of the rapist. It's important to let rape survivors know that what happened wasn't their fault.

You can let the victim know that it's normal to feel guilty and responsible, but also tell them it wasn't their fault. The rapist was the one who chose to commit this crime.

Don't Try to Fix Them

It's scary to see a friend crying, enraged, or out-of-control. Don't try to cheer them up or make them feel better. Don't force them into a hug or other physical expressions of affection - they may not want to be touched. Right now, your friend needs space to feel whatever they're feeling, and they've trusted you to give them that space.

Be Patient

Don't expect your friend to simply "get over it." Many rape survivors still have nightmares or flashbacks twenty years after the event. There is no "appropriate" way to recover from a rape, and nobody can predict how long it will take.

Be Aware of Your Reactions

It's normal to feel angry and helpless as you listen to your friend. Try not to let your own reactions get in the way of being there for your friend.

One common reaction is the desire to go out and punish the rapist. This is normal, but it doesn't help your friend. They need you to listen. If you insist on going after the rapist or reporting the rape yourself, you take away the survivors' power to make that choice.

It's okay to tell your friend that what the rapist did makes you angry, but try not to take the focus off of your friend.

Offer Options, but Support Their Decisions

Rape is a crime that strips away a person's power. Letting them make their own decision about what to do is a way to help them reclaim control. Let them choose if they want to report the rape, or if they want to talk to a counselor. You may not agree with their choice, but only the survivor knows what is best for them at any particular moment.