



IF AN ADULT COMES TO YOU FOR HELP

- **Be aware of your tendencies for denial.**

They are powerful for most of us. No one wants to believe that these events can happen...for if they can happen to someone else, they can happen to us. If we admit they happen, our world becomes a more risky and less meaningful place to be. For some, admitting it happened means opening a past wound suffered but not healed. For others, it means looking at something done to hurt another, which will imply taking responsibility. Both prospects can be very frightening and encourage denial.
- **Validate the person's experience...**

...by quietly listening and conveying your understanding of the difficulty of the experience, in words that reflect her or his response to it rather than yours.
Honor his or her memories.
- **Refrain from minimizing...**

...or “explaining away” anything a person experiences as hurtful.
- **Refrain from blaming or judging.**

Again, though a victim may sometimes have behaved in ways that made him or her vulnerable, victimization happens because the offender chooses to cause harm, take advantage of another's vulnerability.
- **Avoid trying to “fix” anything.**

If you can simply hear and let the person know you care, you will have been profoundly helpful.
- **Don't press the person to report the situation.**

The decision should be made by her or him alone.
She or he has had enough control taken away.
- **Encourage the person to seek help** from people with expertise in sexual assault or harassment and who are comfortable with the issues.
Refer carefully as not all counselors or therapists have these qualifications.
- **Use the “Authorities” if appropriate.**

Know your denominational, workplace, EEOC and legal guidelines for rectifying such situations.