

AN ADVOCATE'S GUIDE FOR TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

NORMALIZE IT

Talking about mental health can feel hard because of the stigma around mental health. But did you know that, according to one study*, **80%** of women who experienced intimate partner violence reported short and long-term mental health impacts?



*BLACK ET AL (2011). THE NATIONAL INTIMATE PARTNER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVEY (NISVS): 2010 SUMMARY REPORT.

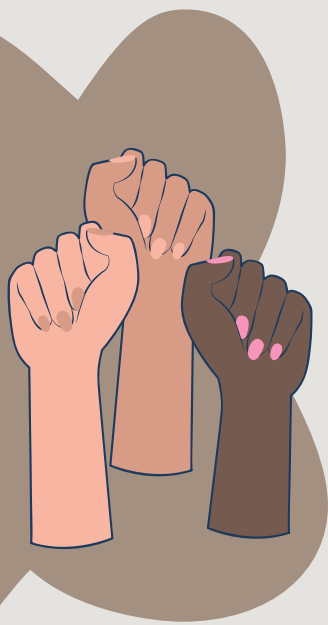


STAY CURIOUS

Ask both opened-ended and direct questions non-judgmentally. Ask questions like, *"How are you doing emotionally? What changes have you noticed in yourself since the trauma? Are you having thoughts of self-harm? Who do you feel safe to talk to?"*

GIVE OPTIONS

Mental health treatment should never be a requirement to receive domestic violence services. Therapy is a great option for many, but not everyone is ready to reach out. **Have a list of qualified mental health agencies** and therapists ready to share with several options that survivors can use, if and when they are ready.



EMPOWER

Therapy is not one-size-fits-all. Let survivors know they can ask their new therapist questions, like:

- **What are your credentials and/or specialized training for trauma?**
- **What types of therapy do you specialize in?**
- **Do you have experience working with trauma survivors and treating traumatic stress?**
- **What are your costs for services?**

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Follow up after making a referral or sharing resources. Let survivors know you are here to talk and support them in their mental health journey. ***You can share the following document with survivors as a conversation starter.***



TIPS FOR FINDING QUALITY MENTAL HEALTH CARE:

A GUIDE FOR SURVIVORS

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK HELP?

There is no "right" time to seek therapy, just the time that's right for *you*. Do you relate to the following:

- **I am having a hard time managing emotions or thoughts about the trauma.**
- **I can't stop thinking about what happened, even when I don't want to.**
- **I want to learn new ways to cope.**
- **I find myself avoiding people, places, and conversations out of fear that I'll be triggered.**
- **I don't feel like myself, and I (or other people) have noticed changes to my personality.**

If so, therapy might be a great option to find support.



WHAT IS TRAUMA THERAPY?

Trauma therapy is treatment designed for people who have experienced trauma. Below are therapies recommended by the American Psychological Association:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PET)

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Brief Eclectic Psychotherapy

Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)

Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/treatments>

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

If you've decided that finding a therapist is the right choice for you, consider these next steps:

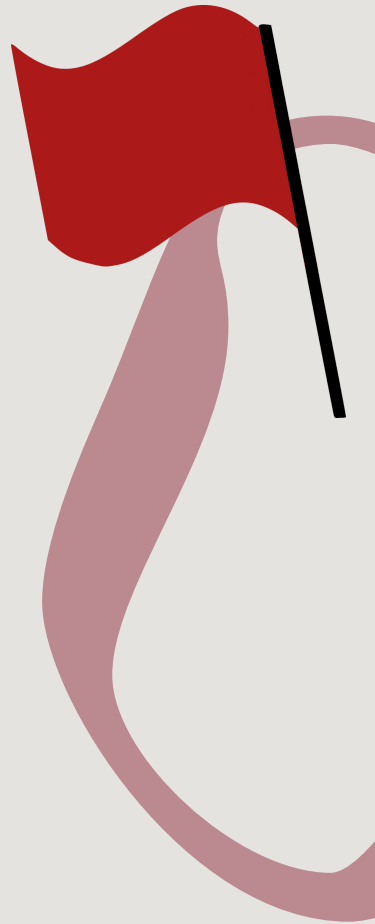
1. **Talk with an advocate** or local domestic violence program. *Therapy may be available to you at no cost through grant-funded services or the Crime Victim Compensation program.*
2. **Use search engine sites** like Psychology Today, FindTreatment.gov, Better Help, etc. to search for and find a therapist.
3. **Do your research find the right fit.** It is normal to interview therapists to see if they are the right fit for your needs, goals, and values.
4. **Identify your goal(s) in therapy.** Commons goals include learning new coping skills, understanding the impacts of trauma, rebuilding a sense of safety, or feeling less guilt or shame about the abuse.
5. **Ask your therapist questions** about their training and specific qualifications for providing trauma-informed therapy.



THERAPY RED FLAGS

Unfortunately, not every mental health professional is qualified to treat trauma survivors. ***Here are some red flags to look out for:***

- Your therapist ignores your safety concerns.
- Your therapist has not explained the risks and benefits of therapy.
- Your therapist cannot explain their framework or plan for treatment after several sessions.
- Your therapist pressures you to share information or details of your trauma before you are ready.
- Your therapist does not share your same goals.
- Your therapist has poor boundaries, such as talking about themselves too much or acting like a friend.
- You aren't seeing progress towards your goals after at least 12-15 sessions.
- You have not been provided with clear information about cost of services in the first session.
- Your therapist invalidates or minimizes your experiences or concerns.



THERAPY TIPS

- **Don't be afraid to interview your therapist** to see if they are qualified to treat your particular concerns.
- **There is no one-size-fits-all therapy.** Look for a therapist that fits your needs, personality, and goals.
- **Telehealth can be accessible and convenient,** but it might not be right for everyone, i.e. those with severe dissociation or psychosis, lack of safe or private space for virtual sessions, individuals lacking access to strong internet connection or technology.
- **You don't have to share everything at once.** Sharing information about your trauma when you aren't ready can be re-traumatizing. Take your time to establish trust and relationship with your therapist.



**EVERYONE HAS MENTAL HEALTH, AND
EVERYONE'S MENTAL HEALTH JOURNEY IS
UNIQUE TO THEM. YOU ARE NOT ALONE.
THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOU.
YOU DESERVE TO BE HEARD.**

**NEED TO TALK TO SOMEONE IMMEDIATELY?
CALL OR TEXT THE NATIONAL SUICIDE AND
CRISIS HOTLINE AT 988.**