



**Skills for Supportive  
Listening During Disclosures  
of *Sexual Exploitation* and  
*Human Trafficking***



# Supportive Listening Skills/Tips

Receiving disclosures of sexual exploitation and human trafficking is a very vulnerable experience and needs to be recognized as such.

***Some skills for supportive listening are:***

- Listen to the victim without judgment.
- Consider your bias; it may be difficult to understand or empathize with some of the individual's choices or the barriers they experience.
- Be aware and soften your body language.
- Mirror their language. For example, if they call the trafficker their "boyfriend," then also use this term.
- Let them take the lead in sharing, avoid leading the conversation.
- Avoid making promises that you can't keep. (e.g., no confidentiality)

# End the Stigma of Human Trafficking

If we can end the stigma of human trafficking and survivors of human trafficking, then there is a better chance of victims coming forward and reporting these despicable crimes.

The stigma behind human trafficking:

Victims and survivors of human trafficking often experience stigma and embarrassment as a result of their experiences. A frequently asked question is, "why didn't you just leave?" The answer is not simple: the development of human trafficking is complicated, and it can be confusing for victims and survivors to understand what has been done to them. In some cultures, gender roles and stigma can add pressure, and reporting human trafficking can carry substantially higher personal risk than forgetting that experience and that trauma. It is also possible that a victim or survivor may feel that they consented to their exploitation or deserved the violence they experienced. Traffickers are masters of manipulation and making the victim feel responsible for the exploitation. No one can consent to be trafficked, and no one deserves to be trafficked.

## ***Things you can do:***

- Leave the door open. Make sure the victim knows the door is always open for them to come back. Let them know that you do not judge them or are ashamed of them due to their exploitation. Their trafficker is telling them the opposite, so this is the best way to counteract this.
- Send messages safely if you can; just let them know you love them and that you miss them. Be aware that they may not be able to respond.
- Let them know there is nothing that would stop you from loving them and caring for them.

- Offer to help them make a safety plan and that they can contact you whenever they may need to, and you can offer them a safe space.
- Furthermore, the goal must be to support the survivor and not punish the trafficker whom they may still love. If you try to punish the trafficker, this could push them away indefinitely.

This document was produced for the purpose of creating awareness about Human Trafficking in Wellington County.

If you are aware of someone trafficking individuals, report it to the Wellington County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers Guelph Wellington on their website [www.csgw.tips](http://www.csgw.tips), or you can also call and leave an anonymous tip at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). If your information leads to an arrest, you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

Victims of Human Trafficking are encouraged to seek support from Victim Services Wellington via email at [victim@vswguelph.on.ca](mailto:victim@vswguelph.on.ca) or by calling (519) 824-1212 Ext. 7304.

### We Stand With You

