

Strengthening her positive coping methods

After a violent event a woman may find it difficult to return to her normal routine. Encourage her to take small and simple steps. Talk to her about her life and activities. Discuss and plan together. Let her know that things will likely get better over time.

Encourage her to:

- Build on her strengths and abilities. Ask what is going well currently and how she has coped with difficult situations in the past.
- Continue normal activities, especially ones that used to be interesting or pleasurable.
- Engage in relaxing activities to reduce anxiety and tension.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule and avoid sleeping too much.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Avoid using self-prescribed medications, alcohol or illegal drugs to try to feel better.
- Recognize thoughts of self-harm or suicide and come back as soon as possible for help if they occur.

Encourage her to return if these suggestions are not helping.

Explore the availability of social support

Good social support is one of the most important protections for any woman suffering from stress-related problems. When women experience abuse or violence, they often feel cut off from normal social circles or are unable to connect with them. This may be because they lack energy or feel ashamed.

You can ask:

- “When you are not feeling well, who do you like to be with?”

- “Who do you turn to for advice?”
- “Who do you feel most comfortable sharing your problems with?”

Note: Explain to the woman that, even if there is no one with whom she wishes to share what has happened to her, she still can connect with family and friends. Spending time with people she enjoys can distract her from her distress.

Help her to identify past social activities or resources that may provide direct or indirect psychosocial support (for example, family gatherings, visits with neighbours, sports, community and religious activities). Encourage her to participate.

Collaborate with social workers, case managers or other trusted people in the community to connect her with resources for social support such as:

- community centres
- self-help and support groups
- income-generating activities and other vocational activities
- formal/informal education.