



## SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH 2022

## TUPHE FEATURE

# Talking about Sexual Violence in a Survivor-Centered Way

## Learn the four D's of Bystander Intervention

Over the past few years, conversations about sexual violence have become more prevalent, increasing awareness of this very important issue. However, these discussions only facilitate healing when they are survivor centered.

People who have experienced sexual violence can be retraumatized when discussions are not handled responsibly. Sexual violence should not be discussed casually or flippantly because you never know if there is a survivor present. "Trigger warnings" are helpful to warn folks when you are about to mention an upsetting topic, but these warnings may not always be enough to ensure the comfort and good health of everyone in the room.

So establish an agreement that folks are OK with the topic before discussing it. Ask for

confirmation that those around you are open to this topic and continue to check in throughout the discussion to make sure they are still comfortable. An essential part of this agreement is to discuss privacy expectations. Never share someone else's story for them, especially if it was told to you in confidence. If you are unsure, assume the survivor requires confidentiality.

Don't press for details. In conversations about sexual violence, no one is ever required to share more than they are comfortable with. This boundary is most easily respected by prioritizing listening to survivors and limiting questions. People will instinctively bring up what they are comfortable sharing, and they will not approach uncomfortable topics.

Remember that impact is louder than intention. While many of

us instinctually approach this topic with pointedness, we must remember that these discussions deserve sensitivity and care. Always speak like there is a survivor listening, especially since you can never assume another person's experiences. This includes not sharing or repeating graphic details or stories that may be upsetting outside of agreed-upon conversations. This also means not discussing a survivor's decisions or behaviors in a prescriptive or judgmental way.

By accommodating people's boundaries, you can have more healthy and productive conversations about sexual violence, and this is a way of supporting survivors. If you make a mistake, remember to own your mistake, acknowledge its impact, apologize, and seek awareness of what not to do in the future.

Bystander intervention is recognizing a potentially harmful situation and choosing to address it in a way that could positively influence the outcome. There are four strategies—the "four Ds"—you can use to intervene when you witness power-based personal violence or the less-severe behaviors that often accumulate into acts of violence.

**Direct.** Deal with the situation directly by interacting with one of the people involved. Try asking someone to stop what they are doing; check on someone you're worried about.

**Delegate.** If you feel uncomfortable saying something or you feel like someone else is better suited to handle it, delegate the responsibility and ask someone else to help. Try asking a friend of the person involved to check in or call TEMS.

**Distract.** Divert the attention of the people in the situation. Try "accidentally" spilling a drink, asking to borrow the phone of the person in the risky situation, asking for a ride, or starting an unrelated conversation.

**Delay.** If you can't intervene in the moment, you can check in with the person afterward to support them and show them they're not alone. Try asking "Is everything okay?" or "Is there someone we can call?" or "What can I do to help?"

## INTERACTIVE GUIDE

Tulane has an **Interactive Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide** designed by and for Tulane students to help survivors of sexual violence navigate and understand the wide array of resources and options available to them. Family and friends of survivors may also use this guide to educate themselves on support options. This guide can be accessed via the QR code, and the [allin.tulane.edu](http://allin.tulane.edu) website.



## SAAM EVENTS

**FULL EVENT CALENDAR** - April events aimed at raising awareness and knowledge about sexual assault intervention and prevention. More info: [allin.tulane.edu/events](http://allin.tulane.edu/events)

**ONE WAVE LUNCH AND LEARNS** - Grab lunch and learn how to be an active bystander. More info: [bit.ly/campus-health-events](http://bit.ly/campus-health-events)



# A Short History of Sexual Assault Awareness Month

As we acknowledge Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), it is important to recognize the historical context that led to this dedicated month, which is part of a greater movement to support survivors of sexual violence.

The beginnings of sexual violence advocacy trace back to long before the United States' Civil Rights Movement. However, during the 1940s and '50s, women of color,

including Black women such as Rosa Parks and other early members of NAACP, increasingly organized advocates for survivors of domestic and sexual violence into organizations and movements. Even though these topics were considered taboo, these advocates illuminated the impacts and intersections of race and identity in sexual violence. The movement grew throughout the 1970s when it expanded to include legislation, funding, and professionalized advocacy for survivors. By 1979,

Loretta Ross became the first Black woman to direct a rape crisis center in Washington D.C.

The early stages of SAAM started in 1979, when The Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (WCSAP) was created. The WCSAP rallied for state-wide legislative changes against sexual violence and pioneered the first Sexual Assault Awareness Week in April of 1979.

Over the next two decades, advocates and legislators

supported survivors of sexual violence, and ultimately, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center and the Resource Sharing Project were established in 2000. Building on WCSAP's work, these organizations determined that Sexual Assault Awareness Month would always be in the month of April, represented by a teal ribbon. This marked the beginning of SAAM, with the first nationally-recognized Sexual Assault Awareness Month in 2001.