

HOW TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Talk to survivors in a private place and allow them to tell you what happened in their own words.
- Understand that survivors may feel uncomfortable talking about the assault.
- Listen and try to make survivors feel comfortable expressing their feelings. Validate their feelings.
- Believe what survivors tell you, and let them know that they are believed.
- Let survivors know that nobody deserves to be sexually assaulted and that it is **not their fault**.
- Do not press survivors for details; ask only what you need to know to assess for health and safety.
- If appropriate, discuss the importance and options of seeking medical care.
- Offer options and resources for support, but allow survivors to make their own decisions.
- It is very damaging to ask survivors why they did or didn't do something connected to the assault. Keep in mind that it is the assailant who is the one responsible.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES EUGENE AND SPRINGFIELD, OR.

Sexual Assault Support Services

591 W. 19th Avenue
Eugene, OR. 97401
(SASS is wheelchair accessible)

- 24-Hour Crisis/Support Line:
(541) 343-SASS (7277)
1-800-788-4727 within Oregon
- Business:
(541) 484-9791 (V/TDD)
(541) 342-3693 Fax
- Website: www.sass-lane.org

Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force

- Website: www.Endsexualviolenceoregon.org

How to Help People with Developmental Disabilities Stay Safe from Sexual Assault

There are many behaviors and skills that family, friends, caregivers and service providers can encourage and foster in people with developmental disabilities to help them stay safe from abuse. Read on for important information about sexual assault, how it relates specifically to people with developmental disabilities, and what you can do to help prevent it.

BREAKING FREE

P.O. Box 1023
Eugene, OR. 97440
(541) 343-5513
befree@efn.org
www.breaking-free.net



SEXUAL ASSAULT:

Sexual activity against someone's wishes. Offenders may use physical force, manipulation, coercion, threats, bribery or intimidation.

Is sexual assault really a problem in our society?

Yes! According to research by the Centers for Disease Control, at least "1 out of every 6 adult women, or 230,000 adult women in Oregon, has been the victim of forcible rape some time in her lifetime."

25% of women and 5% of men have been victimized by some type of sexual assault.

Of those women who have been raped in the U.S., 60% were first raped under the age of 18. In Lane County, over 22,000 women have been raped.

What is specifically known about the sexual assault of people with developmental disabilities?

People with developmental disabilities (PWDD) are sexually assaulted more often (1.5-5 times) than the general population.

As many as 83% of women and 32% of men with developmental disabilities have been victims of sexual assault.

PWDD experience more repeated incidents of sexual assault. 49% of people with developmental disabilities who are victims of sexual violence will experience 10 or more incidents of abuse.

As we know, PWDD are vulnerable to being taken advantage of, especially by people they trust. This exploitation is often sexual.

PREVENTION:

What you can do to help people with developmental disabilities stay safe:

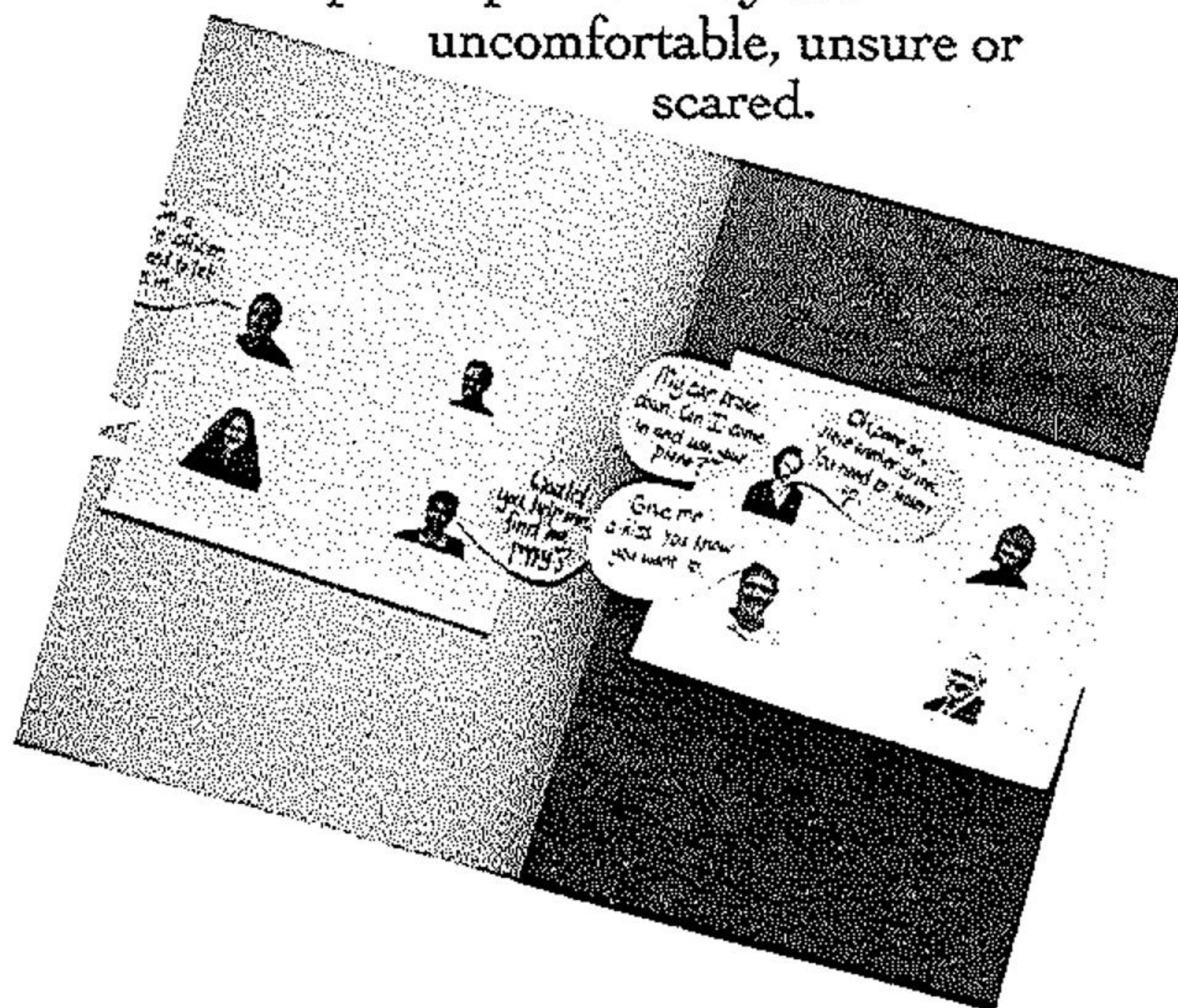
Provide opportunities for the person to identify and express her or his feelings.

When someone with a developmental disability is able to identify their feelings, they know when they are uncomfortable and when certain situations and behaviors are wrong for them.

When someone with a developmental disability is encouraged to express their feelings, they will be better equipped to let other people know when their behavior is inappropriate.

Allow the person to make choices and say "NO."

Often, PWDD have few choices in their lives. This may keep them from knowing that they have the choice to say "NO" when someone tries to touch them inappropriately or coerce them into sexual acts. The more PWDD are supported to be assertive and make decisions in other aspects of their lives, the more able they will be to speak up when they are uncomfortable, unsure or scared.



Respect the person's personal space by:

- ★ knocking and asking for permission before entering the person's bedroom.
- ★ not pressuring or forcing the person to display physical affection.
- ★ practicing socially acceptable space between the person and yourself.
- ★ modeling boundaries by giving the person feedback if they are too close to you or others.
- ★ refraining from touching the person without asking and receiving permission.
- ★ assisting them in defining boundaries with the other people in their lives.

Encourage the person to set both physical and emotional boundaries.

Setting boundaries can be difficult, but practicing in everyday situations makes it easier. Start by explaining the concepts of personal space and behavior appropriate to personal and community relationships. Role playing appropriate boundary setting can be very helpful.

Teach the person accurate information about anatomy and sexuality.

Often PWDD do not receive adequate sex education. It is important to recognize that PWDD have a right to relationships and talk to them about healthy sexuality. This makes it easier to talk about ploys that sexual perpetrators might use. In addition, teaching PWDD about their anatomy can increase their own understanding of when touch may be inappropriate.