Although each person is unique, there are some feelings and reactions that most sexual assault victims experience. It may be helpful for you to know about these responses. However, always remember that even though many victims experience similar reactions, there are still individual differences in how people respond to the trauma of sexual assault.

A victim may experience some or all of these symptoms. They may occur immediately, or you may have a delayed reaction weeks or months later. The feelings may be very intense at times. Sometimes the feelings seem to go away for a while and then come back again. Certain situations, such as seeing the assailant or testifying in court, may intensify the symptoms or cause them to reoccur after a period during which the victim has been feeling better.

**Self-blame:**
Often victims will go through a period where they recount all the things they could have done to prevent the assault. Reminding them that sexual assault is not a natural consequence for their decision is a good way to support them.

**Shock:**
Initially, most sexual assault victims react with shock and disbelief. They may feel numb and dazed, withdrawn and distant from other people. They may want to forget about what happened and avoid people or situations that remind them of the assault.

**Intense Emotions:**
Many survivors experience intense emotions in the aftermath of a sexual assault. At times, they may feel angry. Victims may also feel afraid, anxious or depressed. Often emotions will change frequently, resulting in a rollercoaster ride of contentment to extreme anxiety and back again.

**Memories:**
There may be periods when a victim is preoccupied with thoughts and feelings about the assault. They may have unwanted memories or flashbacks and nightmares. They may re-experience some of the sensations and feelings they had during the assault, such as fear and powerlessness.

**Physical Symptoms:**
Some victims have physical symptoms, such as sleep disturbances, headaches, and stomachaches. Victims may find that it is very difficult to concentrate on routine activities. They can also experience changes in sexuality, such as a loss of interest in sex or avoidance of sexual situations.