

# THURSDAYS IN BLACK DISCLOSURE GUIDE

Thursdays in Black wants to acknowledge the resources, design and mahi of HELP Wellington ( especially Mel Calvesbert for their four principles for Dealing with Disclosures), Sexual Abuse Prevention Network and Wellington Rape Crisis. This disclosures guide is based off the mahi of these agencies and their resources which we have adapted for Thursdays in Black.

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**\*THURS  
DAYS**  
IN BLACK  
Towards a world  
without rape  
and violence



**\*RĀPARE**  
KĀKAHU PANGO  
Tēnei te huri ke te ao tūkinu kore,  
ki te ao pāwhera kore.

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# DISCLOSURES

Taking Thursdays in Black to campuses is great for raising awareness of sexual violence within student communities. However, it is important that you are aware that this kind of visibility can often trigger a range of reactions. Although uncommon, someone may disclose an experience of sexual abuse or rape to a TIB volunteer/ worker.

This document will give you some important **DOs** and **DON'Ts** for handling this. If someone does disclose to you it is vital that you believe him, her or them and respond with empathy - but **we do not expect you to counsel them!** We want to make it clear that is **not** the job of stall attendees or people helping with the campaign.

Your job is to ask them what they need and direct them to the appropriate support services nationally, locally, and on your campus. **If you are working a stall this information should be readily available and printed in a take-away format for your visitors.**

**If you are handing out flyers or promoting TIB, please have printed take away formats available should people need them. You can find these per region on our website:**

[www.thursdaysinblack.org.nz/supportservices](http://www.thursdaysinblack.org.nz/supportservices)

# DISCLOSING BEING A VICTIM / SURVIVOR

If you receive a disclosure these are four great guiding principles to follow. Please familiarize yourself with these and figure out which ways of response work best for you and your own well-being. Imagine how you might respond in such a situation.

Sexual violence can take away or reduce a person's sense of:

**TRUST**  
**SELF ESTEEM**  
**SAFETY**  
**CONTROL**

When you respond to a disclosure try and make sure your response increases their sense of these feelings rather than diminishing them further. If someone does disclose to you, respond with these principles in mind in the following ways:

# TRUST

Say affirming statements like;

"It's not your fault."

"I believe you."

"You didn't deserve that."

"I'm so sorry this happened to you/that this was your experience."

**Do not ask** 'why' questions, or ask for a recount or for more details. This could be harmful for them or for you.

Remember, you do not have all the answers, it's okay to say that. Try "I don't know how best to give you the support you need, but together we can find the right service". Here is where you would direct the individual to the takeaways of support services at your stall and talk to them about what is on the sheet.

**NEVER!** express any suspicion, disbelief or discomfort and if you feel suspicion or disbelief, TIB might not be the role for you. Be honest with yourself if that is the case.

# CONTROL

Respect their confidentiality. Debrief with someone you trust about your own feelings afterwards, but remember their story is taonga and should be treated with respect and care. Don't share with anyone any information that the victim/survivor shared with you.

Consider why someone is telling you - is it for support? Options? Empathy? Do they just want to normalize their experience?

**Don't push people to take action like going to the Police** or making any other type of formal complaint. You can however let the person know that if at any point they want to know more about what the Police process is, then to contact their local agency (e.g Rape Crisis or HELP) to find out more.

Remember, people haven't had control over the violence they have experienced, **and they need to have control over their healing.**

# SAFETY

Ask "Are you safe now?" or "Do you feel unsafe?"

Remember it is not your job to counsel them but this information might help you understand what support services they need. If someone is directly asking you for action to make it stop, consider if you are the right person to do this and help them get to the right person if not.

A person can feel unsafe long after abuse has occurred. There may be practical things that your institution can help with to ease this sense of unsafety (trigger warnings on content, support leaving late at night etc). Talk to our National Co-ordinator if people mention any concrete support they need from their institutions.

"There are free services that could help resource you to manage....(flashbacks, anxiety, making a safety plan)...would you like their details?"

# SELF ESTEEM

"You deserve support."

"You are entitled to support."

"You are brave for speaking up."

Normalise what the person is feeling and experiencing - trauma has many impacts and specialised support can reduce these.

# DISCLOSING BEING A PERPETRATOR ENGAGING IN SEXUAL HARMFUL BEHAVIOR

(This is rare but important to know)

- We respect and acknowledge that this is uncomfortable but try to remain calm until they have said what they need to say
- Acknowledge and affirm their choice to do something about this problem
  - You can say "it's good that you have acknowledged that your behaviour is harmful"
- Remember to try and think of it as bad behaviour, not a bad person
- Acknowledge that it is not your role to counsel them, but give options for action they can take
  - You can say "I can't talk with you about this now, but I can give you the contact for WellStop who can"
- At any stage you can point them to support service WellStop which is for people with harmful sexual behaviours.

We acknowledge that it is a very sensitive issue if a perpetrator discloses to you. By responding calmly, acknowledging them for coming forward and pointing them in the direction of support services, you are doing a huge service to victims. <3 **However at no point do we ask or expect you to compromise your own sense of safety.** You can always say "I can't talk with you about this, but I'll see if someone else can". See if someone else from your stall can discuss this with them and relay the above points.

# REMEMBER YOUR OWN SELF CARE

If someone has disclosed to you, debrief with someone. You can also call an agency to discuss what you have heard and the effect it has had.

Ask yourself what follow up is needed for the person or your processes and include this in reports back to Thursdays in Black. TIB will then be able to work towards making the stalls safer spaces for visitors and minders.

If you have been triggered by a disclosure remember all the advice above applies to you too. **There is no experience that is too small to ask for help with.**

# FOR THE WHOLE TEAM

It is very important that as a TIB volunteer you check in with the rest of your team to make sure that they are okay during the day, especially if someone has disclosed to them. Check to see how they're feeling about it and if there is anything they need if this happens. They can contact the National Co-ordinator at 04 498 2500 to discuss their experience if they need a listening ear.

Try and make sure there is time when the stall finishes for everyone to sit down, have a chat, and have a cup of tea.