



Join Brave Step to Color It Blue

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Who is Brave Step?

Brave Step empowers individuals who have been impacted by sexual violence. To shape a strong, supportive community, we:

- Provide personalized services that help adults impacted by sexual violence claim the life they deserve;
- Foster brave public conversations about sexual violence; and
- Cultivate courageous changemakers.

Website: www.BraveStep.org

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: @ABraveStep

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bravestep/>

What does Brave Step do and/or offer?

Brave Step equips adult survivors, loved ones and the community with the skills and understanding to shape a strong, supportive community.

How do we do that? In a number of ways:

- **Adult Survivor Care:** Brave Step serves as a steadfast guide for adult survivors of sexual violence on their personal journey to wellbeing, empowerment and claiming the life they deserve. Brave Step uses a multi-faceted model that includes individual counseling, group therapy, peer-led support groups, empowerment programs, and ways to find one's voice.
- **Loved Ones:** Brave Step believes that loved ones and allies of sexual violence survivors can play a crucial role in helping survivors claim the life they deserve if effectively armed with knowledge, skills, and support from others in similar experiences. In addition to counseling, Brave Step has a psychoeducation program for loved ones that creates a trauma-informed environment and process to safely express one's emotions; builds a baseline of knowledge on sexual violence; and provides tangible ways to support the survivor short and long term.
- **Changemaker:** Fostering brave public conversations about sexual violence is at the heart of what we do. It is our responsibility to inform the community on the impact of sexual violence, preventative measures to take and how we can collectively fight this pervasive and devastating issue.

How prevalent is sexual violence?

The reach and impact of sexual violence runs deep. (Source: RAINN)

- About 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys in the United States experience child sexual abuse.
- Ninety-one percent of child sexual abuse perpetrators are individuals known by the child victim or their family members.
- Every 68 seconds someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. Every 9 minutes, that victim is a child.
- One hundred percent of us are impacted by sexual violence.

On college campuses (Source: RAINN):

- Women ages 18-24 are at an elevated risk of sexual violence
- 13% of all students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation (among all graduate and undergraduate students).
- About 1 in 5 college-aged female survivors received assistance from a victim services agency.
- 23.1% of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming) college students have been sexually assaulted.

For additional statistics on the matter of sexual violence, visit RAINN's comprehensive website at <https://www.rainn.org/statistics>.

Sexual violence is not vague abuse but an act of violence. It leaves behind a life-altering mental, physical, social, financial and spiritual impact. It cripples individuals as well as the family and community. Here are some, not all, examples of the long-term impact sexual violence can have.

- Avoiding, fearing or no interest in sex.
- Difficulty establishing interpersonal boundaries
- Getting involved in abusive relationships
- Re-experiencing assault again through flashbacks
- Depression, fear and/or anxiety
- Negative feelings when touched
- Feeling dirty or ugly
- Feeling guilty and shame
- Blaming themselves for the abuse
- Eating disorders
- Medical problems like pelvic pain

- Feeling disconnection from reality, especially under stress
- Repression or denial of what happened

What is Color It Blue?

Color It Blue is Brave Step’s signature campaign to encourage survivors, loved ones, allies and the community to embody their advocacy and initiate new conversations about this pervasive issue. Everyone is encouraged to “**Color It Blue**” for April to demonstrate their support and courage during Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

How can I or my organization get involved with Color It Blue?

The beauty of Color It Blue is it is completely customizable and scalable to you and/or your organization. Explore the ideas below or feel free to create your own approach to spread awareness by coloring it blue.

Idea	Brief Description	Ways to Color It Blue
Wear Blue	Select a day in the month to invite coworkers, friends and community members to wear blue.	Photograph and share the groups’ blue apparel on social media and/or within your organization. Designate a blue sock or shirt day. Distribute blue ribbons. Celebrate participants with a blue cupcake or Krispy Kreme doughnut.
Picnic or BBQ	Invite family, friends, coworkers or associates over for a picnic or BBQ.	A corn-hole competition with blue bean bags. Create a blue nail painting booth for adults and/or children. Encourage guests to wear blue. Offer a signature blue drink or blue desserts.
Hair and/or Nail Salon Engagement	If you own, work at or even frequent a hair or nail salon, engage the staff to celebrate “Color It Blue” one week or for the month.	Promote blue nail polish as the color of the month. For patrons that Color It Blue, make a donation to Brave Step in their honor. Offer blue highlights or extensions throughout the month of April.

		Host a blue-themed customer appreciation event in April.
“Blue Saturday or Sunday”	For faith-based organizations, designate a Saturday or Sunday in April for a “Blue Saturday/Sunday.”	Encourage members to wear blue and take a moment to highlight the subject matter or a moment of silence for all impacted.
College Campus	Highlight the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses. Mobilize a community of changemakers.	Display blue flags in a prominent area of campus to represent the number of students who are or will become a survivor. For Denim Day, offer cut up pieces of denim to decorate with puffy paint. Wear denim on April 24, 2024. Work collaboratively with a student group to host a panel discussion on sexual violence or intimate partner violence.
Inspiration Cards	Write a survivor or loved one inspiration card.	As an individual or a group, take time to write a heartfelt card that will lift up and encourage a survivor or loved one. Cards will be shared with Brave Step clients and other groups where survivors are located.
Color It Blue for artists & creatives	For the creative and artistic, create a blue work of art.	
Spread the Message	Sharing graphics on social media or posting flyers.	If you want to help spread the message, utilize our resources in the graphics section to encourage awareness and engagement.
Penny Wars	Penny Wars or the “battle of spare change” is a friendly competition where pennies are a plus and silver coins can be a negative. Groups compete for the most number of pennies and can sabotage another group by adding silver change to their jar.	While you can easily define the rules and approach, this is a fun way to engage groups who have a competitive spirit. For example, a team could work together to collect 100 pennies and earn themselves 100 points. However, if a rival team then deposited 4 quarters (25 points x 4) into that team’s jar, it would deduct 100 points and leave them at 0.

Competitive Organizations	If you have a friendly rivalry with another team, business or group, consider challenging them to a Color It Blue competition.	<p>Penny Wars, see above</p> <p>Compete for the most number of participants or the biggest Color It Blue statement. Ex. Most blue balloons.</p> <p>A CEO head-to-head Color It Blue challenge where each CEO is willing to wear the most outrageous blue with an employee-vote for the winner.</p>
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If you are a first-time event planner or simply want extra assistance, check out this [helpful step-by-step guide](#) to plan your Color It Blue activities.

Color It Blue Giveaway Items and Brochures

These items are helpful for outreach purposes and help to connect with your community!

Items(s)	Where to Find
Brave Step Brochure	Download it here and print .
Blue Ribbons	<p>To request blue ribbons, email changemaker@bravestep.org. To note, Brave Step has a limited supply and may not be able to fulfill all requests.</p> <p>To order on Amazon, click here.</p>
Blue Flags	<p>Display blue flags at your home or workplace to raise awareness of sexual violence.</p> <p>You also can order pinwheels.</p> <p>To order on Amazon, click here.</p>
Color It Blue Stickers	<p>To request Color It Blue stickers, email changemaker@bravestep.org. To note, Brave Step has a limited supply and may not be able to fulfill all requests.</p> <p>View or print your own here.</p>
Color It Blue Promotional Cards	To request Color It Blue promotional cards, email changemaker@bravestep.org .

Graphics and Promotional Materials

Item	Where to Find
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Social media graphics	Access images here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mErrNWtuyIM25J3pLF1A-zTFniQWd_1k?usp=sharing
Flyer/poster	Download it here and print. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mErrNWtuyIM25J3pLF1A-zTFniQWd_1k?usp=sharing
Messaging & Hashtags	Outlined below.

Social Media campaigns: Spread the word about your “Color It Blue” event on your social media platforms. Here are suggested hashtags and a link to suggested posts to share:

Hashtag suggestions:

- #ColorItBlue
- #SAAM
- #ChildAbusePreventionMonth
- #IColoredItBlue
- #BraveStep
- Ex. #BOAColorsItBlue or #ColorItBluewithxxx”

Suggested social media post captions:

- Join me as I #ColorItBlue for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month. #SAAM #ChildAbusePreventionMonth
- **Color It Blue** is @ABrave Step’s signature campaign to encourage EVERYONE to advocate and initiate new conversations about sexual violence.
- During #SAAM in April, I challenge you to **Color It Blue** by coloring your nails, hair or mustache blue, wearing blue or booking an appointment at @modernsalonandspa to add blue fairy hair or blue tape-in extensions.
- Rock your blue attire (or socks) to raise awareness for sexual violence. Tag @ABraveStep and show us your true-blue colors.
- I just Colored It Blue, and this is just the beginning. I’m challenging (insert 3 friends) to be brave enough to Color It Blue and share your “why” with those you love.
- Don’t you love my Color It Blue sticker? Open to brave conversations on why as an ally I rally behind #ColorItBlue #SAAM and #ChildAbusePreventionMonth.
- During April, I color it blue because ... Join me.
- For Sexual Assault Awareness Month, it’s important that we Color It Blue as parents or family members of young children to bring awareness to the devastating and prevalent issue of sexual violence.

Share Your Results

Not only would we love to see your engagement and successes shared socially, but we’d love to capture the overall impact for Color It Blue.

Please take 5 minutes to share your results via this simple form.

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=d9sYg_xhEUe33weWcBnYfHQ0RBbOihNGgWO9Yyl5i2hUQzNTT0c2OUYzV0RJUTRYTUxDRVE2U0wxSC4u

Feel free to share your best photos or videos by emailing them to changemaker@bravestep.org.

Prepare and Talk about Sexual Violence

Whether it is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, Child Abuse Prevention Month or life brings this issue to your doorstep, the dilemma of how to start and have a conversation about sexual violence is challenging.

Much like the subject matter itself, having a brave conversation about sexual violence is nuanced and situation dependent. In [Brave Step's](#) mission to foster brave conversations about sexual violence, we want to equip you with the tools and brave steps to take when talking about sexual violence.

Keep in mind some situations may require more extensive help and support and/or may be a part of an ongoing investigation.

Where do I start?

As you begin to plan for this conversation, prepare yourself and how you might respond.

Based on the statistics that one in four women and one in six men are sexually violated by the age of 18 and every 68 seconds someone is sexually assaulted in the United States, you may be surprised to learn that the person you are speaking to is, in fact, a survivor.

In case they are, here are some helpful suggestions.

- Believe. Make it clear that you believe the individual and that is not her/his/their fault.
- Do not deny or minimize the abuse.
- Do not blame and shame the survivor.
- Be present and patient.
- Ensure the individual is safe, physically and mentally.
- Alert the proper authorities, if needed.
- Refer to professional care and resources.

It is important that we, as adults, make intentional efforts to educate family members and friends on the subject matter of sexual violence. Before you can do that, you need to be educated yourself.

Brave Step has compiled a number of trauma-focused resources on its [Changemaker portal](#) to begin the education process. Also, recent Changemaker trainings such as author and advocate Jayneen Sander's talk on [Consent and Body Safety](#) as well as [Pat's Place presentation on online grooming](#) are great resources.

To teach children about sexual violence, it is helpful to start as early as possible. Using books from [Educate2Empower's](#) lineup or short videos like [Consent for Kids](#) are a great tool to open up the conversation. Additionally, Brave Step's "[Color It Blue](#)" campaign for Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a great conversation starter with other adults.

Here are several steps to begin the education process and dialogue:

- Teach children to properly name their body parts. Don't use nicknames or "cute" names.
- Educate children that they have the power to say "no" and understand that their body is their own.
- Explain the difference between a safe touch and unsafe touch. Here is a great informational video from Darkness To Light: <https://www.d2l.org/education/additional-training/healthy-touch-children/>.
- Engage the child in identifying a network of adults that the child feels safe going to and trusts.
- It's also helpful that you encourage conversations on difficult topics. This sets the example that you are trusted and supportive even when the subject matter is difficult.
- Provide examples at age-appropriate levels of what a good secret might be and a bad secret. <https://youtu.be/ko9WIVZQ2Xc>

This is only a starting point. Conversations about sexual abuse, assault, body boundaries, safe or unsafe touches, among many other topics, should be an ongoing dialogue and evolve as a child you care for grows and matures.

Here are additional resources that may prove helpful in navigating conversations on this prevalent and complex topic.

- [Tip Sheet: Talking to Children and Teens by Stop It Now!](#)
- [How To Talk to Your Kids about Body Safety and Consent - Motherly](#)
- [Start the Conversation: New Yorkers Against Sexual Assault Toolkit](#)
- [Consent for Kids video by Blue Seat Studios](#)
- [Harvard Graduate School of Education: Consent at Every Age](#)

Visit Brave Step's [Changemaker portal](#) for additional resources and join an upcoming Changemaker training.

What do I do if I suspect sexual violence?

Gently and calmly talk to the child or adult.

- It is important to keep a few things in mind to create a safe space for them to talk. [RAINN](#) provides some helpful suggestions on creating this environment.
 - **Pick your time and place carefully.** Choose a space where the individual is comfortable or ask them where they'd like to talk. Avoid talking in front of someone who may be causing the harm.
 - **Be aware of your tone.** If you start the conversation in a serious tone, you may scare the person, and they may be more likely to give you the answers they think you want to hear—rather than the truth. Try to make the conversation more casual. A non-threatening tone will help put the person at ease and ultimately provide you with more accurate information.
 - **Talk directly.** Ask questions that use the child or adult's own vocabulary, but that are a little vague. For example, "Has someone been touching you?" In this context "touching" can mean different things, but it is likely a word the person is familiar with. He/she/they can respond with questions or comments to help you better gauge the situation like, "No one touches me except my mom at bath time," or "You mean like the way my cousin touches me sometimes?"

- **Listen and follow up.** Allow the child or adult to talk freely. Wait for them to pause, and then follow up on points that made you feel concerned.
- **Avoid judgment and blame.** Avoid placing blame by using “I” questions and statements. Rather than beginning your conversation by saying, “You said something that made me worry...” consider starting your conversation with the word “I.” For example: “I am concerned because I heard you say that you are not allowed to sleep in your bed by yourself.”
- **Be patient.** Remember that this conversation may be frightening for the person. Many perpetrators make threats about what will happen if someone finds out about the abuse.
- *Source:* RAINN. If You Suspect a Child Being Harmed. www.rainn.org. May 12, 2022. <https://www.rainn.org/articles/child-sexual-abuse> <https://www.rainn.org/articles/if-you-suspect-child-being-harmed>

Report it

- Ensure that the person is in a safe place. If you have concerns over safety, be sure to discuss them explicitly with authorities when you make the report. If you fear that the perpetrator will cause further harm to the person upon learning about the investigation, clearly communicate this to authorities.

What can I do in the moment to support a survivor?

There are some ways of showing support that are helpful.

- Listen to and believe the survivor
- Affirm the survivor’s decision to confide in you
- Refrain from asking questions about the sexual violence
- Communicate without judgement
- Encourage the survivor to get support but realize that only they can make the decision to get help.
- Tell the survivor “You did NOTHING to cause the sexual violence. Regardless of the circumstances that led up to the sexual violence, it is not your fault. It is important that you don’t blame yourself.”
- The survivor’s safety is the most important concern. If they feel they may be in danger, contact a local agency to assist with a safety plan.

Know what not to do

Often loved ones or allies don’t want to believe that the abuse is true. They want to protect the family or their social relationship with the family, friends, coworkers, etc. Even if they have good intentions, loved ones may reinjure the survivor. Here are some ways they may do that.

- **Do Not Deny or Minimize the Abuse:** Many survivors never receive recognition from family members or others of their abuse. People may accuse them of lying, exaggerating, or having false memories. Even acknowledgement does not necessarily mean that families and others understand or are willing to recognize the impact of sexual abuse. Survivors may be pressured not to talk about their abuse, even after perpetrators apologize.
- **Do Not Blame and Shame the Survivor:** A common response is placing blame on the survivor. They may ask why victims did not disclose sooner, why they “let it happen,” or even make explicit accusations of seduction. When such accusations start, the family’s or friends’

focus shifts onto the survivor's behavior instead of where it belongs — on the perpetrator's crimes. Victim-blaming is used to keep survivors quiet.

- **Do Not Tell Survivors to Move on and To Stop Focusing on The Past:** This approach is destructive and backwards. Survivors should be given space and supported as they explore their trauma, examine its effects, and work through their feelings in order to heal. Only by dealing with the abuse does the past begin to lose its power, allowing survivors to move forward. This happens in each stage of life, like starting to date as a teenager and in adulthood with a partner. Pressuring survivors to “move on” is another way that family members and friends avoid addressing the abuse.
- **Do Not Shut Down Their Voices:** Families or friends often reject or ignore survivors' stories of abuse as well as their feelings, needs, thoughts and opinions. Survivors may be accused of treating loved ones badly because they call attention to the abuse, express their hurt and anger, or assert boundaries in ways they never could when they were younger. They are often told to stop making trouble, when they are in fact pointing out trouble that has already occurred.
- **Do Not Ostracize Survivors:** Ostracizing is when families or friends leave survivors out of events and social gatherings, even while their abusers are included. Whether it is intended or not, this action punishes the survivor for making others in the family uncomfortable and is another kind of unhealthy family behavior.
- **Do Not Refuse To “Take Sides”:** Family members or friends may say they don't want to take sides between the survivor and perpetrator. However, staying neutral when one person has caused damage to another is choosing to be passive in the face of wrongdoing. Survivors, who were left unprotected in the past need and deserve to be supported as they hold abusers accountable and protect themselves and others from additional harm. Family members and friends may need to be reminded that the abuser committed hurtful acts against the survivor, and therefore being neutral is not OK.
- **Do Not Pressure Survivors to Make Nice with Their Abusers:** Survivors should never be asked to face their perpetrators, especially to brush the abuse under the rug to make others feel better. Pressuring survivors to do that just repeats the abuse of power that was exerted upon them at the time they were violated and is therefore destructive and indefensible.

If you would like to learn more, Brave Step offers a six-session group that provides the knowledge, skills and a community to learn how to support a survivor of sexual violence. Visit www.BraveStep.org/LovedOnes to explore and sign up.

Brave Step Contact Information

Email: changemaker@bravestep.org
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