



## Welcome & Let's “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](http://www.BraveStep.org)

Facebook, Instagram: @ABraveStep

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

## 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 well-being, empowerment and claiming the life they deserve. We offer individual counseling, group therapy, peer-led support groups, empowerment programs and ways to find one's voice.

“I felt it was a safe place where I can be around people that understand.” - *Survivor*

“This program has changed my life.” - *Survivor*

- **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. 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.

“Being able to connect with other individuals who are going through similar situations and not feeling so alone on this journey has been most helpful. It's oftentimes hard to discuss things with family and friends, especially if they haven't gone through trauma on this level. I am very grateful for this group.” — *Mother of a Survivor*

- **Changemaker:** The Changemaker program raises public awareness and fosters conversations about sexual violence. It provides resources and educational workshops aimed at prevention, trauma management and community building.
  - **Vetted Resource Library:** A comprehensive, trauma-informed library of resources available to community members.
  - **Quarterly Virtual Workshops:** Workshops on prevention, education, wellness and self-care, delivered virtually, allow broad participation.
  - **Community-Based Psychoeducation Workshops:** Workshops focused on sexual violence prevention and supporting survivors.

## Why is the Color It Blue campaign important?

Simply put, **EVERYONE IS IMPACTED BY SEXUAL VIOLENCE.**

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. The reach and impact of sexual violence runs deep.

- Over 50% of women and 25% of men experience sexual violence in their lifetime (CDC).
- A person is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds in the U.S. (RAINN).
- Underreporting: An estimated 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police (NSVRC).
- Ninety-one percent of child sexual abuse perpetrators are individuals known by the child victim or their family members.
- **One hundred percent of us are impacted by sexual violence.**

For additional statistics, visit RAINN at <https://www.rainn.org/statistics>.

## 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.

You can stand up, speak out and show your support by:

- Coloring your nails, hair or beard blue.
- Wearing blue to stand out and speak up.
- Displaying a blue ribbon or Color It Blue sticker.

Join the "Move"ment:

- Make every step, stretch and stride count for survivors.
- Whether you walk, run, bike, dance, practice yoga, join a fitness class or create your own unique way to move, your actions symbolize courage and support during Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- Together, we'll turn movement into a powerful statement of advocacy, raising awareness and empowering communities to take action. So, lace up, gear up and let's move for a cause that matters.

Let your voice be heard.

- Post your Color It Blue style on social media with #ColorItBlue, #SAAM and #BraveStep.
- Start powerful conversations - visit BraveStep.org for suggestions.
- Challenge 3 friends to Color It Blue and join the cause.
- Rally your community to be educated, empowered and ready to act.

In 2024, hundreds of volunteers and activists rallied in support of Color It Blue. Activities included rallying coworkers to wear or be adorned with blue, community-based events and outreach, distributing thousands of blue ribbons, having valuable conversations with family, friends and allies, and more. To gain inspiration and encouragement, take a few minutes to [watch this video](#).



## 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.

- Volunteer
- Advocate
- Donate
- Join the “Move”ment

### VOLUNTEER

IDEAS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>A first step</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start by sharing one statistic about sexual violence on your social media.</li> </ul>
<b>Go Blue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a day in the month to invite coworkers, friends and community members to wear blue, paint your nails blue, etc.</li> <li>• Photograph and share the groups’ blue apparel on social media and/or within your organization.</li> <li>• Designate a blue sock or shirt day.</li> <li>• Distribute blue ribbons.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate participants with a blue cupcake.</li> </ul>
<b>Volunteer Ribbon-Making Event</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemble volunteers to create blue ribbons to distribute.</li> </ul>
<b>Host a Donation Drive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a donation drive to collect blue-themed items for a “Courage Kit,” which is a small welcome packet and self-care kit. Contents can vary, but a few suggested items include a small hand lotion, slippers, a small journal, a word of encouragement, adult coloring book with colored pencils, lip balm, small inspirational calendar or mini poster of inspirational quotes, short books or reminders on grounding techniques or mindfulness, and/or candle.</li> <li>• These kits are excellent for your local rape crisis center. To find your closest location, visit <a href="https://centers.rainn.org/">https://centers.rainn.org/</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Assemble Courage Kits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer your time to assemble Courage Kits once the above items have been donated.</li> </ul>
<b>Bracelet Making</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create handmade bracelets with the letters B R A V E or similar words of encouragement to distribute to survivors and loved ones or donate to your local rape crisis center.</li> </ul>
<b>Rally Coworkers</b>	<p>Employee engagement could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An employee-focused panel discussion</li> <li>• English and/or Spanish-language workshops such as teaching parents and caregivers consent and body safety, women empowerment and more.</li> <li>• Working with employee resource groups to engage members and volunteers.</li> <li>• Create a one-day employee educational event.</li> <li>• Offer a virtual Loved Ones group.</li> </ul>
<b>Inspiration Cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As an individual or a group, take time to write a heartfelt card that will encourage a survivor or loved one.</li> <li>• Cards can be delivered to your local rape crisis center. To find your closest location, visit <a href="https://centers.rainn.org/">https://centers.rainn.org/</a>.</li> </ul>

## ADVOCATE

IDEAS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Wear Blue &amp; Initiate Conversations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While rocking your blue apparel or nails, initiate conversations about “why” you are wearing blue and how everyone is impacted.</li> </ul>
<b>Neighborhood Tree of Hope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tie blue ribbons with messages of courage and healing to a tree.</li> </ul>
<b>Hair and/or Nail Salon Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Promote blue nail polish as the color of the month.</li> <li>• For patrons that Color It Blue, donate to Brave Step in their honor.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer blue highlights or extensions throughout the month of April.</li> <li>• Host a blue-themed customer appreciation event in April.</li> </ul>
<b>“Blue Saturday or Sunday”</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>College Campus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses.</li> <li>• Mobilize a community of changemakers.</li> <li>• Display blue flags in a prominent area of campus to represent the number of students who are or will become a survivor.</li> <li>• For Denim Day, offer cut up pieces of denim to decorate with puffy paint.</li> <li>• Wear denim on April 30, 2025.</li> <li>• Work collaboratively with a student group to host a panel discussion on sexual violence or intimate partner violence.</li> </ul>
<b>Spread the Message</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Denim Day April 30, 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denim Day is a day to wear denim to show support for survivors and advocate for stronger legal protections.</li> <li>• Ask for a \$1 donation or more on Denim Day to support survivors in need.</li> </ul>
<b>Competitive Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a friendly rivalry with another team, business or group, consider challenging them to a Color It Blue competition.</li> <li>• Compete for the greatest number of participants or the biggest Color It Blue statement. Ex. Most blue balloons.</li> <li>• Create a head-to-head challenge for leaders to judge who is willing to wear the most outrageous blue with an employee-vote for the winner.</li> </ul>

## DONATE

IDEAS	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
<b>Shoe Recycling Drive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help fuel Brave Step’s mission by hosting a sneaker recycling drive as an individual or as a group. By recycling and reusing gently-loved sneakers, we are keeping them out of the landfills and raising dollars for this mission. To learn more and/or request a shoe recycling bag, please contact <a href="mailto:info@bravestep.org">info@bravestep.org</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Sell Blue Ribbons or Blue Hair Extensions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request a \$1 donation for every ribbon or hair extension distributed.</li> </ul>

<b>Walmart Wish List</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Order mission-driven items for Brave Step from our Walmart wish list. <a href="https://www.walmart.com/registry/RR/b4e65b13-bd4b-4cee-87ca-cc8f760060fe">https://www.walmart.com/registry/RR/b4e65b13-bd4b-4cee-87ca-cc8f760060fe</a></li> </ul>
<b>Sell Blue Cupcakes or Blue Raspberry Red Bull Drinks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sell one or both items to then donate dollars to survivor care and services.</li> </ul>
<b>Picnic or BBQ</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invite family, friends, coworkers or associates over for a picnic or BBQ and ask for donations to support the cause.</li> <li>A corn-hole competition with blue bean bags.</li> <li>Create a blue nail painting booth for adults and/or children.</li> <li>Encourage guests to wear blue.</li> <li>Offer a signature blue drink or blue desserts.</li> </ul>
<b>Penny Wars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 greatest number of pennies and can sabotage another group by adding silver change to their jar.</li> <li>While you can easily define the rules and approach, this is a fun way to engage groups who have a competitive spirit.</li> <li>For example, a team or work shifts 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.</li> </ul>
<b>Donate in a Survivor’s Name</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you know of a survivor or a loved one impacted by sexual violence, consider making a \$10 donation in their name at <a href="http://www.BraveStep.org/donate">www.BraveStep.org/donate</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Company Matching Dollars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check with your employer to see if it will match your donated dollars, thus doubling the impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Donations for Volunteer Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some companies will make donations to celebrate your volunteer hours. Be sure to check company policy and submit your hours to further this mission.</li> </ul>
<b>Create an Online Fundraiser</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rally your friends, family and network to donate to your personalized fundraiser, expanding reach and care for current and future generations. Online fundraisers could include a Facebook fundraiser or you are welcome to use <a href="https://secure.givelively.org/donate/brave-step-inc/2025-color-it-blue-with-brave-step">https://secure.givelively.org/donate/brave-step-inc/2025-color-it-blue-with-brave-step</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Skill &amp; Time Donations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are passionate about this mission, we welcome your time and expertise as a volunteer. Explore <a href="http://www.BraveStep.org/Volunteer">www.BraveStep.org/Volunteer</a> to contribute your skills and time.</li> </ul>

## JOIN THE “MOVE”MENT

IDEAS

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

<p><b>Lace up for the Virtual Walk/Run</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This April, step into action with Brave Step during our annual <a href="#">Color It Blue Virtual Walk/Run</a>. Whether you prefer walking, running or hiking, every step you make adds to the collective momentum of hope and well-being.</li> <li>• This year, we're adding some exciting twists to amplify the energy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Team Up in Blue: Gather your crew, form a team and create coordinated blue outfits to stand out while standing together for survivors.</li> <li>○ Blue-Themed Accessories: Showcase your blue-themed accessories on your walk whether it is blue workout apparel, blue face paint, ribbons or socks.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Your participation goes beyond the steps you take—it's a bold statement of advocacy, a commitment to raising awareness and a promise to empower communities to take action. Together, we'll create a sea of blue that speaks louder than words.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Lace up. Gear up. Move for a cause that matters.</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Kid-Friendly Fitness: "Little Steps for Change"</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host family-friendly events with activities for kids, like mini fun runs, obstacle courses, or parent-child yoga classes.</li> <li>• Use these as opportunities to discuss prevention and empowerment in an age-appropriate way.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Yoga Session</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a sunrise, lunchtime or happy hour trauma-informed yoga session for a donation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step Challenge</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a virtual step challenge among employees which encourages good health habits, exercise and activism for sexual violence.</li> <li>• Create a pledge sheet to donate \$xx per step or a maximum of a \$10 donation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>"Blue Ribbon Bootcamp"</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A special outdoor or virtual bootcamp session.</li> <li>• Use the bootcamp structure to symbolize strength and resilience, connecting the physical challenge with the emotional strength of survivors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>"Color It Blue-a-Thon" Fitness Day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a day of fitness, featuring back-to-back activities like Zumba, spin, HIIT, and yoga sessions.</li> <li>• Incorporate education and advocacy between sessions with survivor stories or informative talks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>"Blue Moves" Yoga and Fitness Classes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with local gyms, yoga studios, and fitness instructors to host "Color It Blue" themed classes.</li> <li>• Encourage attendees to wear blue workout attire or incorporate blue props (like yoga mats or headbands).</li> <li>• Classes could end with a moment of reflection or empowerment tied to the cause.</li> </ul>



## QR CODES TO DONATE

Brave Step Website



Venmo



PayPal



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 Marketing

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

Items(s)	Where to Find
<b>Brave Step Brochure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Download it <a href="#">here and print</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Blue Ribbons</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brave Step has a limited supply and may not be able to fulfill all requests. We recommend ordering ribbon supplies or pre-assembled ribbons as part of your event experience.</li> <li>To order on Walmart, <a href="#">click here</a> or to order on Amazon, <a href="#">click here</a>.</li> <li>To make your own, ribbon and safety pins supplies can be found on our <a href="#">Walmart</a> or <a href="#">Amazon</a> wish list.</li> </ul>
<b>Blue Flags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Display blue flags at your home or workplace to raise awareness of sexual violence.</li> <li>You also can <a href="#">order pinwheels</a>.</li> <li>To order on Walmart, <a href="#">click here</a>. To order on Amazon, <a href="#">click here</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Color It Blue Stickers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To request Color It Blue stickers, email <a href="mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org">changemaker@bravestep.org</a>. To note, Brave Step has a limited supply and may not be able to fulfill all requests.</li> </ul>
<b>Color It Blue Promotional Cards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To request Color It Blue promotional cards, email <a href="mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org">changemaker@bravestep.org</a>.</li> </ul>

## Graphics and Promotional Materials

Item	Where to Find
<b>Social media graphics</b>	Access images <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Flyer/poster</b>	Download it <a href="#">here</a> and print.
<b>Key Messages</b>	Outlined below.
<b>Social Media Hashtags</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#ColorItBlue</li> <li>#SAAM</li> <li>#ChildAbusePreventionMonth</li> <li>#IColoredItBlue</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #BraveStep</li> <li>• Ex. #BOAColorsItBlue or #ColorItBluewithWalmart</li> </ul>
<b>Additional Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TikTok/Instagram Reels Challenge: Create a hashtag challenge where people post short videos of themselves talking about why they "Color It Blue," showing off creative blue outfits, nail art or creative ways they are raising awareness.</li> <li>• Influencer Partnerships: Partner with micro-influencers or local community leaders to boost your Color It Blue efforts.</li> </ul>

Suggested social media posts:

1. Join me to #ColorItBlue this Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month. Let's raise awareness together. 💖 #SAAM #ChildAbusePreventionMonth
2. Color It Blue is @ABraveStep's signature campaign, sparking important conversations and actions to advocate against sexual violence. Will you join the movement? 💖 #ColorItBlue
3. In honor of #SAAM, I'm challenging YOU to #ColorItBlue! Whether it's with blue nails, blue hair or bold blue extensions, let's stand up and be heard!
4. Let's rock the blue! Wear your best blue attire or even socks to show support for Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Don't forget to tag @ABraveStep and share your true-blue colors! 💖 #SAAM #ColorItBlue
5. I just #ColoredItBlue, and now I'm challenging (insert 3 friends) to do the same! Share your 'why' and let's spread the message together. 💖 #ColorItBlue
6. Loving my Color It Blue sticker! Proud to be an ally and open to brave conversations about why we support #ColorItBlue, #SAAM, and #ChildAbusePreventionMonth. 💖
7. In April, I color it blue because raising awareness for sexual violence is crucial. Will you join me? 💖 #ColorItBlue
8. As parents and family members, it's vital we #ColorItBlue during Sexual Assault Awareness Month to show our commitment to ending sexual violence. 💙 #SAAM #ChildAbusePreventionMonth

#### Email or Newsletter Copy

Subject: Join Me in Supporting Sexual Assault Awareness & Child Abuse Prevention! 💖

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I'm reaching out to invite you to join me in supporting a cause that's close to my heart—raising awareness about sexual violence and child abuse prevention.

This April, during Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) and Child Abuse Prevention Month, I'm participating in the [Color It Blue](#) campaign, led by Brave Step. It's a simple yet powerful initiative to start conversations and show solidarity for survivors and those working toward a safer, more supportive world.

Here's how you can help:

- Color It Blue: Paint your nails, rock blue attire, or even add some blue fairy hair or tape-in extensions.

- Spread the Word: Share your “why” on social media and tag @ABraveStep to inspire others.
- Be Brave: Challenge your friends and family to join the movement and share their support.

*For Volunteers:* If you're passionate about hands-on support, I encourage you to get involved with local events or virtual actions. Together, we can help spread awareness and support the brave survivors who need our voices. You can join organizing efforts, share your own story or provide your time to events.

*For Donors:* Your financial support is crucial in funding prevention programs, support services for survivors, and community outreach efforts. Any donation, no matter the size, will go directly toward creating a safer world for survivors and helping to prevent future abuse. [Donate today](#) and make a lasting impact.

*For Community Organizers:* If you're involved in local efforts, consider planning an event or outreach initiative in your area. I've attached a toolkit to help guide you in organizing events, from spreading awareness to creating partnerships with local organizations. You can make a difference in your community and beyond!

Together, we can make a real difference in raising awareness and creating lasting change. Will you join me?

Let's Color It Blue!

Best,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Contact Information]

## 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/r/BMeheSAGz7>

Feel free to share your best photos or videos by emailing them to [changemaker@bravestep.org](mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org).

## FAQ

- What if I can't wear blue every day? Can I still participate?
  - Absolutely. Find a day or time that works best for you to make a difference.
- Can I participate in Color It Blue if I don't live in the U.S.?
  - Sexual violence is a global problem, and we welcome anyone in the world to join in these efforts to raise awareness and create change.
- How do I know if my donation or event is being tracked or making an impact?
  - If a donation is received by Brave Step, we issue a donation letter typically within 48 hours.

- To track your event and Color It Blue activities, we encourage you to submit your efforts here: <https://forms.office.com/r/BMeheSAGz7>.
- Does it cost anything to participate?
  - Color It Blue is designed for any budget. You can participate simply by wearing blue clothes that you already have, costing you \$0. Or you can choose to purchase blue ribbons or host a Color It Blue event. How much you do and what you spend is entirely up to you.
- What's the simplest and easiest way to participate?
  - Start by sharing one statistic about sexual violence on your social media.
  - You can visit Brave Step's social media (@ABraveStep) and share an informative post, if that is easier as well.
- If my company wants to get involved, what should we do?
  - First, explore the ideas listed above. If you need support activating one or more, please contact us at [changemaker@bravestep.org](mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org).
  - To expand the reach and create a more robust relationship, please reach out to [changemaker@bravestep.org](mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org) to explore that opportunity.

## Brave Step Contact Information

Email: [changemaker@bravestep.org](mailto:changemaker@bravestep.org)

Phone: 704-361-5230 ext. 0

## Addendum

### 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 an 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/ko9WlvZQ2Xc>

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 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 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 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](http://www.rainn.org). May 12, 2022. <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 the 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 the 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 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 to 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 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](http://www.BraveStep.org/LovedOnes) to explore and sign up.