



The Callisto Survivor's Guide

Information and resources for survivors of sexual assault, rape, and professional sexual coercion.

We believe you.

For more information about Callisto, please go to projectcallisto.org

The Callisto Survivor's Guide

I. Welcome. We believe you.

Before you begin, please know that you are not alone. We have created this guide to share information and resources for survivors of sexual assault, rape, and sexual coercion. We hope that you find it helpful.

We know that this time in your life can be very stressful and that much of the language here may be triggering or upsetting. However, we also hope that you find this guide to be empowering and uplifting. It is written by fellow survivors to remind you that you are surrounded by a community of caring individuals, and that there are many resources available to help you on your journey.



We are stronger. Together.

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II. Understanding the Language

As a survivor navigating your options to take action, you may be learning a whole new language of law, policy, and psychology. In this section, we will walk you through the most important terms related to rape, sexual assault, and sexual coercion.

Before we begin, we want to stress two things. First, anyone—no matter their sex, gender, age, race—can be the victim of rape, sexual assault, and sexual coercion. Second, rape, sexual assault, and sexual coercion are inexcusable. They are never, ever the fault of the victim.

Warning: The following pages contain triggering and graphic definitions. Please feel free to skip this section altogether or come back at a later time.



UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE

Definitions to Know

These pages contain general definitions of sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual coercion, and rape. Please see the links for state-specific information.

Consent:

The legal definition of consent differs from state to state. In general, consent is an active, verbal agreement to engage in sexual activity with someone. ***Sexual activity without your consent is rape or sexual assault.*** If you are underage, under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or sleeping, you do not have the capacity to give consent. If someone pressures, tricks, or emotionally forces you to agree to sexual activity, this is considered sexual coercion.

- Visit RAINN to find the [legal definition of consent](#) in your state.
- Visit The Survivor Alliance to find the [legal age of consent](#) in your state.

HEAR FROM AN EXPERT

“Consent is the ability to choose, based on your own internal experience, what you want physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and sexually, and then to communicate those wants.”

- Staci Haines, from the Survivor's Guide to Sex

Sexual Coercion:

Any person of any sex, gender, age, and race can be a victim of sexual coercion. Sexual coercion means pressuring, tricking, threatening, or non-physically forcing someone into any sexual activity. This can also be in the form of requesting sexual activity in exchange for a professional or financial benefit. You do not owe anyone sex—not your investors, bosses, mentors, teachers, or anyone who does or does not have any power over you.

- Visit the Office of Women's Health to read the [legal definition of sexual coercion](#).
- Visit RAINN to find the [legal definition of sexual coercion](#) according to your state.



UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE

Definitions to Know

These pages contain general definitions of sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual coercion, and rape. Please see the links for state-specific information.

Sexual Harassment:

Any person of any sex, gender, age, and race can be a victim of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment creates a hostile work environment and is illegal. Sexual harassment includes any unwanted verbal or physical sexual behavior in the workplace. This can range from sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy, or looks, to very serious acts that qualify as assault or rape. Sexual harassment is about the impact of the behavior on you, and the severity and frequency of the incidents. It is not about the intent of the person who is engaging in the behavior.

- Visit the EEOC to read the [legal definition of sexual harassment](#).
- Visit RAINN to find the [legal definition of sexual harassment](#) according to your state.

Sexual Assault:

Any person of any sex, gender, age, and race can be a victim of sexual assault—including spouses and long-term partners. Any sexual activity that you did not consent to is sexual assault. While sexual assault and rape are sometimes used interchangeably, sexual assault also refers to non-penetrative sexual activity, including fondling and molestation.

- Visit the Department of Justice to read the [legal definition of sexual assault](#).
- Visit RAINN to find the legal definition of [sexual assault according to your state](#).

Rape:

Any person of any sex, gender, age, and race can be a victim of rape—including spouses and long-term partners. When someone penetrates your vagina or anus with any object or body part, or your mouth with their sex organ, without your consent, it is rape. Please know that consent to one sexual act does not imply consent to another sexual act. There can be rape even if the victim consented to certain sexual acts.

- Visit the Department of Justice to read the general [legal definition of rape](#).
- Visit RAINN to find the [legal definition of rape](#) according to your state.



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UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE

More Resources

[American Bar Association Directory](#)

[BetterBrave](#)

[Department of Justice: Legal Definition of Rape](#)

[Department of Justice: Legal Definition of Sexual Assault](#)

[EEOC: Legal Definition of Sexual Harassment](#)

[Legal Age of Consent by State](#)

[National Employment Lawyers Association](#)

[National Women's Law Center](#)

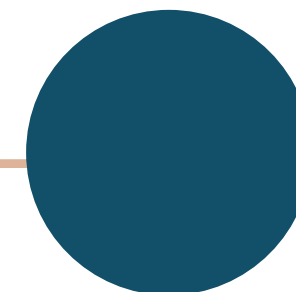
[Office of Women's Health: Legal Definition of Sexual Coercion](#)

[RAINN: Definition of Consent by State](#)

[RAINN: Legal Definition of Rape and Assault by State](#)

[RAINN: State Law Database](#)

If you experienced an event that was traumatizing, or just didn't feel right, and you are not able to define it, you can talk to an attorney to help you understand the legal aspects of what happened. Check with a local justice center or your local [bar association](#) to get information on their legal aid support.



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III. Practicing Self-Care

Sometimes the pressure to engage in self-care after a traumatic experience can create even more stress. You may wonder if you are doing it correctly or you may feel a need to demonstrate your strength and resilience to others.

We hope that this list will inspire you to engage in self-care that is the right fit for what you need. Remember that whatever works for you is the "right" way.

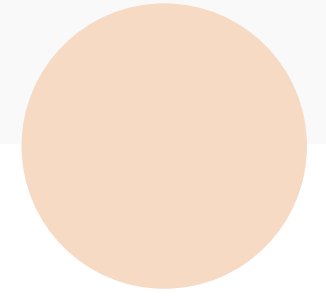
Research shows that 70% of sexual assault survivors experience moderate to severe distress, which is a larger percentage than for any other violent crime.

(NSVRC, 2015)





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Self-Care

Talking about, or even thinking about, your traumatic experience can be emotionally draining. Because it is difficult to predict how you might feel on any given day, you might want to consider building a regular plan for self-care. Ideas include going for a run, visiting a museum, taking a relaxing bath, or spending time with a close friend. Below are some self-care tips to consider.

Engage in physical movement.

Run. Walk. Bike. Climb. Swim. Take a dance or martial arts class. Enjoy the sensation of your physical body in a positive way through movement.

Care for your mind.

Meditate. Download a mindfulness app or podcast. Attend a spiritual or guided meditation service. Play soothing music while you breathe deep and relax. Engage in active mindfulness through activities such as art, crafting, cooking, or organizing.

Take care of yourself.

Find new positive experiences.

Research shows that people find greater happiness from positive activities and experiences, rather than physical things. Examples include massage, acupuncture, live music, theater, museums, volunteering for a cause you that you find meaningful, day trips with loved ones, and exploring intimacy with a partner.

Take care of the basics.

Establish a sleep routine. Eat to nourish your body. Take time to bathe and groom yourself. Visit healthcare providers.

MORE RESOURCES

[AFROPUNK: 8 Mental Health and Self-Care Resources for Queer and Trans POC](#)

[Greatist: 67 Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors](#)

[Healthline: Best Meditation Apps of 2018](#)

[Just Jasmine: Self-Care for People of Color After Psychological Trauma](#)

[National Sexual Violence Resource Center: Information for Survivors](#)

[Option B: How to Support a Friend After Sexual Assault](#)

[Psychology Today: The Preference for Experiences Over Possessions](#)

[RAINN: Self-Care After Trauma](#)

[Rockwood Leadership Institute: 21 Self-Care Resources](#)

[Teen Vogue: 6 Self-Care Tips for Sexual Assault Survivors](#)

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iv. Getting Emotional Help

Rape, sexual assault, and sexual coercion can have lasting effects on your mental health. That is because these are serious violations of your body and trust—and not because you are not strong. As a survivor, you might develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, or insomnia after an incident. You might struggle with feelings of shame, guilt, or inadequacy. None of these responses to trauma make you a weak person, and there are many resources to help you feel better.

“I thought it was normal. I thought I probably brought it on myself. I thought no one would care. I thought it probably didn’t matter anyway. I thought I wasn’t important enough to bother. I thought I was alone.” - Anonymous Survivor





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Psychotherapy

Psychotherapists help us navigate through difficult times of our lives, find new meaning in trauma, and teach us helpful coping skills. Psychotherapists usually hold degrees in counseling, social work, or psychology. It is helpful to search for a trauma-informed therapist, as they specialize in treating survivors.

Finding a psychotherapist can seem like a big undertaking, but it doesn't have to be. [Psychology Today](#) and [GoodTherapy.org](#), for example, have therapist search engines that allow you to search by specialty, insurance, or by the kind of treatment they offer. Once you have found a couple of therapists that accept your insurance, offer a sliding-scale fee, and have a history of working with trauma patients, give them a call to set up an initial consultation. This will allow you to figure out whether you and the psychotherapist will work well together. It's okay if it takes a while to find a therapist that is the right fit for you.

A Note About Treatments

Some psychotherapeutic [treatments](#), including EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing), PE (prolonged exposure), and CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy), have been found to be highly effective on trauma survivors. When looking for a therapist, ask them if they offer these treatments. Do not be discouraged if they don't—they might still be able to help you.

FINDING A THERAPIST

Psychiatry

Psychiatrists are trained medical doctors, and have the ability to prescribe medication. Your therapist might refer you to a psychiatrist if they believe that psychiatric medication would help you feel better.

Online or Text-Based Therapy

If in-person therapy is not for you, you can speak to someone online from the comfort of your own home.

- [Crisis Text Line](#). Crisis Text Line is a free crisis texting service staffed by trained volunteers. You can text 741741 from anywhere in the U.S. to be matched with a volunteer.
- [BetterHelp](#). BetterHelp offers affordable, private online counseling.
- [TalkSpace](#). TalkSpace offers online therapy with a licensed therapist.
- **911. If you are in danger or suicidal, please call 911.**



Talking to Loved Ones

You own your story. Only you can decide if it is the right time in your journey to talk about your experience with loved ones. If you choose not to talk about it, that is okay too. There is never pressure to come forward if you do not feel ready.

Preparation

If you are feeling nervous, you might want to consider writing down what you want to say beforehand. That way, if you lose your train of thought, get emotional, or have a difficult time finishing, you can rely on your notes. It can also help to tell your loved ones what your expectations are of them, so they can prepare themselves. For example, you might want to open with, "I would like to share something that happened to me with you. It won't be easy for me to talk about, and it might not be easy for you to hear. I only ask that you listen, and be patient with me." After the conversation, try to find time to practice self-care.

Time & Location

If you have decided to tell the people you love what happened to you, the timing and location of the conversation can be important. For example, it can help to have the conversation when none of the parties involved are in a hurry—so avoid morning rush hours, or when you or your loved one have an immediate commitment. It can also help to have the conversation in a quiet place you find safe.

Sometimes, even when we say and do all the right things, these conversations might not go well. Our loved ones might be afraid, angry, or triggered themselves, and act in ways that make you feel unsupported. To prepare for these difficult moments, you might want to consider picking a place you can leave comfortably if you need to remove yourself from the conversation. That way, if the conversation does not go the way you hoped, you can say, "thank you so much for listening. I'm going to need some time for myself now."



More Resources

[BetterHelp](#)

[Crisis Text Line](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs: Trauma Treatments](#)

[GoodTherapy](#)

[Job Accommodations Network \(JAN\)](#)

[National Queer and Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)

[Psychology Today: Find a Therapist](#)

[RAINN: How Therapy Can Help](#)

[RAINN: Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault](#)

[TalkSpace](#)

[Therapy for Black Girls](#)

“You’re not a victim for sharing
your story. You are a survivor
setting the world on fire with
your truth. You never know who
needs your light, your warmth
and raging courage.”

- Alex Elle

Your Journey. Your Choice.

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v. Reporting the Incident

Your story matters. It belongs only to you. Please know that there is no pressure to talk about or report your story unless or until the time is right for you. If you never choose to report, that is okay too.

In this section, we share ways to take care of yourself during the reporting process. If you choose to report the incident to the police in the immediate aftermath, some of the tips in this guide might not apply to you.

“Reporting sexual misconduct can be incredibly difficult, so [Callisto] offers a less intimidating option to those who may not be ready or willing to have a face-to-face conversation yet.” -Anonymous Respondent to Callisto Student Survey

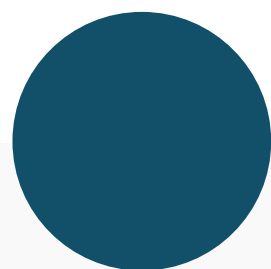




Know Your Rights and Your Constraints

As a survivor of rape or sexual assault, you have certain rights under the laws of your state. Check with a local justice center or your [local bar association](#) to get information on their legal aid support to better understand your local rights.

In some states, there are laws that prevent you from bringing legal action after a certain number of years have passed. You can find information on states' statutes of limitations for [assault](#) and for [sexual harassment or coercion](#).



Document Your Experience

If you do not feel it is the right time to go to law enforcement, you may choose instead to capture sensitive and private details of the event in other ways, such as writing, video, and photos. Keep your documentation in a very safe place so that you are in control of when and how these details are shared and so that you can continue to own your story.

- Document communications. Document messages, chats, emails, or screenshots that can support your case.
- Capture what happened in writing, with details about the incident as well as what happened before and after. Include dates, exact location, names of other people present, and who you talked to. Include the date of when you created these notes.
- Take photographs. If your perpetrator left physical marks on your body—bruises, strangulation marks, bite marks, etc.—take photos.
- Share your notes and other documentation with a person of trust, such as a therapist or attorney, or put them into a vault under the care of a third party. They will be used if and when you are ready to come forward.



Report As Soon As Possible (If You Are Ready)

If the assault just happened and you are ready to report, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. Medical professionals will be able to do a full medical examination to check for any physical harm. They will also be able to conduct a forensic exam (also known as a rape kit). The exam will allow samples of the perpetrator's DNA (hair, semen, blood) to be saved. These samples can be used as evidence if you decide to press charges.

A lot of survivors think—or are told—that it is impossible to conduct a forensic exam if you have already showered and/or changed your clothes. In fact, medical professionals can find physical evidence of the assault up to 72 hours afterwards. If you have already showered, please do not be discouraged, and call 911.

A Note About Forensic Exams

While preserving forensic evidence of the crime can be important to building a case against your assailant, these exams can be difficult experiences. Survivors have described forensic exams as retraumatizing and intrusive. If you can, please consider asking a friend to take you to the hospital and home afterwards so you feel more comfortable.

Your Journey. Your Choice.



Prepare for an Interview with Law Enforcement

Preparing for the Interview

- Get to know your detective. Call the police station ahead of time to schedule your interview. Once a detective is assigned to your case, take a few moments to email or call them to iron out the details of your day at the station. Having a recognizable face or voice in the room can humanize the experience.
- If you know other survivors, ask them if they would be willing to share their experience in how best to prepare. Each individual situation is different, and you know your own case best. But it can be helpful to learn from survivors who have already gone through the reporting process—even if it is only for words of encouragement.
- It's okay to ask for help. No one should have to go through this alone. There are survivors and allies all around you. Confide in someone you trust, ask them to accompany you to the police station, and know that you are not alone.

Make It as Comfortable as Possible

- Bring a friend. Ask someone you trust to walk you to and from the police station. They can wait in the lobby or waiting area while you talk to the detectives, and make sure that you are taken care of afterwards.
- Bring a bottle of water or a snack. A big bottle of water or some food will not only quench your thirst and give you energy, but will also give you something to hold in your hands.
- Ask to take a break at any time that you need one.
- It is okay to say the words "I don't recall" if you can not remember something.
- Investigators usually have a list of questions that they ask everyone, and some may not be relevant to your situation.
- If you can, take the day off to take care of yourself.



After Reporting

Have a Plan

Particularly for the days following your trip to the police station, it is helpful to have a plan. If you can, schedule your interview toward the end of the week, so you can spend the weekend doing relaxing things that make you happy—be they spending time with loved ones, going on a long hike with a trusted friend, or watching your favorite movies. Give yourself something special to look forward to.

Practice Self-Care

Self-care looks different for everyone. You can find some popular recommendations for self-care in this guide.

Follow Up with Law Enforcement

Detectives often work on many cases at a time. Make sure your case does not fall through the cracks by checking in with the law enforcement officer assigned to your case.

MORE RESOURCES

[BetterBrave: State Statues of Limitations](#)

[National Women's Law Center](#)

[RAINN: Reporting to Law Enforcement](#)

[RAINN: State Statute of Limitations for Assault](#)

[RISE: Sexual Assault/Abuse Survivors](#)

[The National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

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vi. Navigating Professional Sexual Coercion

If you have experienced sexual coercion in a professional setting, you may feel overwhelmed. Many people do not share or report these incidents because they have no idea where to begin. Please know that your experience is valid and that there are resources to help you move forward in navigating professional sexual coercion.

*75% of employee sexual harassment claims include retaliation claims.
Men are 27% less likely to report than women. (Source: EEOC)*





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Navigating Professional Coercion

Before You Go to Human Resources, Document Everything

- Read your company's employee handbook and familiarize yourself with your company's policies on sexual harassment/coercion, how to report, and what is to be expected after you report.
- Save a written record of every interaction, with dates, times, and all important details.
- Include notes about conversations you have had with others about the incidents.
- Print emails.
- Take screenshots of messages or images and backup your phone.
- Save copies of emails or texts that you have sent to others about the incidents.
- Use a personal email address and computer, rather than a work computer. Keep all your notes in a place that is secure. This will enable you to be in control of the timing and manner in which you share this information.

IDENTIFY YOUR WISHES TO MAKE THE BEHAVIOR STOP

- It may feel very hard or scary to confront someone, especially if they are in a position of power. If you are able, let the person know that their behavior makes you uncomfortable.
- Be firm and specific. Never apologize.
- Document this interaction.

“I thought it was normal. I thought I probably brought it on myself. I thought no one would care. I thought it probably didn't matter anyway. I thought I wasn't important enough to bother. I thought I was alone.” -
Anonymous Survivor



71% of workplace harassment incidents go unreported.

(Source: [BetterBrave](#))

Consider a Free Consultation from an Employment Lawyer

- You can seek consultation no matter where the behavior falls on the spectrum of sexual misconduct, even if you do not think it is severe.
- All conversations are protected by attorney-client privilege.
- The lawyer will listen to your story and inform you of your rights and the best way to proceed with your employer.

Retaliation is Illegal

- There are laws that protect you from retaliation for reporting.
- If you are abused, threatened, reprimanded, punished, or held back in any way in any way for reporting your incident, you should immediately document the retaliation and contact an employment attorney.

MORE RESOURCES

[BetterBrave](#)

[Equal Opportunity Employment Commission](#)

[Equal Rights Advocates](#)

[Lean In: Dealing with Sexual Harassment](#)

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vii. How Callisto Can Help

Callisto is a non-profit organization that creates technology to combat sexual assault and coercion. If you have experienced sexual assault or professional sexual coercion, you can create an entry of your incident in Callisto. **Your entry will never be seen by anyone**, including Callisto, unless another person names the same perpetrator. If there is a match, you will be connected to a Legal Options Counselor who will safely and privately help you navigate all of your options to take action.

Callisto users are six times more likely to report and three times more likely to seek emotional and medical support. Since 2015, Callisto has identified serial perpetrators in 10% of matching records. In school year 2017-2018, 15% of records entered into the matching system were matched.





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Using Callisto is an easy and safe way to feel empowered after experiencing rape, sexual assault, or professional sexual coercion.

We help you find the right options to take action in a way that feels best for you.

Protecting your community.

HOW CALLISTO CAN HELP

Here's how it works:

- Once you have activated your account, you can create an entry that documents your experience of sexual misconduct. You will be asked to name your perpetrator, including their unique identifiers (such as social media URLs, phone numbers, and emails) so that we can detect a match.
- All of the information is encrypted and secure.
- If someone else names the same perpetrator, a match will be identified and your entry information will then be shared with a Callisto Legal Options Counselor. The Legal Options Counselor will then reach out to you by your preferred contact method.
- A Legal Options Counselor is an attorney, vetted by Callisto, who will advise you of your rights and will help you navigate your options for taking action. All conversations with the Legal Options Counselor are protected under attorney-client privilege, so you can ensure your privacy is protected.



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HOW CALLISTO CAN HELP

Callisto Has Considered:

Your privacy is crucial.

We collaborate with thought-leaders and experts in cryptography to develop a system that allows for complete privacy from end to end.

Read more about our encryption method on [our white paper](#).

Designed for survivors, by survivors.

Callisto team members understand the experiences of sexual assault and professional sexual coercion. Our trauma-informed platform relies on input from experts in law and psychology to make your experience as comfortable as possible.

You have agency over your experience.

There is no one “right” path for you to take, and our Legal Options Counselors are here to help you find the best one for you. Options may include taking no action for now, connecting with the other victim, confronting the perpetrator, going to human resources, filing legal charges, going to the press, or other choices.

SUGGEST AN INSTITUTION



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Thank you for your continued support. If you would like to get involved with Callisto, please go to projectcallisto.org to donate, volunteer, or suggest an institution.

SUGGEST AN INSTITUTION

Take care of yourself.

We encourage you to print or share this guide with loved ones, peers, colleagues, and friends.



Instagram & Twitter: @callisto facebook: @callistoorg