



## Sexual violence

Students attending Loughborough University may have been subject to sexual violence and want to understand what happens if you do or do not choose to disclose.

Often attending university gives you space to reflect on past experiences and the safety to report assault or abuse for the first time. The services outlined are relevant no matter when the assault or abuse took place. All disclosures will be treated seriously.

### I've been the subject of sexual violence; do I have to disclose?

No. There's no right way to recover.

Being sexually violated can take away your sense of control, so in recovering it's important that you choose what happens next and when. Supportive people that you trust to listen can be an important resource. A therapist, or another professional, can provide non-judgmental support, but take your time to find someone who you can collaborate with, and who you trust enough to tell 'no', if they approach things in a way that doesn't fit for you.

Stories about other people's experiences of sexual violence, shared through media, can help you feel less alone, and might even contain tools you can use, but be cautious about comparing yourself to others and judging your recovery against someone else's. Learning to tune into what hurts, and what helps you as a unique and whole person, is likely to be more nourishing than conforming to an idea of a model way of dealing with what has happened to you.

### What happens If I decide to disclose to the University?

You can tell any member of staff across campus, who will advise you of your options. They will complete a form, which will notify the Student Services Duty Assessment and Inclusion Team (DAI), who will then contact you and offer you additional emotional and practical support. For example, with your studies, mitigating circumstances, adjustments for exams or support with the content of any modules. The team can also support you to access specialistic therapeutic support. DAI advisers are there to listen and empower you, with whatever reporting option you choose.

## Are there any things that I can do that will help me cope?

Everybody responds differently to traumatic experiences, some students experience sadness, low mood and anger, others feel numb and distressed. It is important to start from a place of self-compassion and remember that there is nothing wrong with you, these are all normal reactions to a traumatic experience.

Here are some key activities that can promote recovery;

- Rest when needed.
- Start with the basics – eat, sleep and activity.
- Connect with people you trust.
- Self-care means thinking about what will work for you. Reading, crafting, writing a journal all can help, but remember every individual has their own experience of trauma. Finding what works will change over time. Keep going, you are not alone.

## Can I thrive after being subject to sexual violence?

‘Whilst being subjected to sexual violence does change us and does have an impact on us - it does not stop us from being who we are. We are whole people with interests, skills, views, thoughts, feelings, knowledge, responsibilities, education, roles, lives, rights, qualities, values - and futures. When professionals define us as victims or survivors, they are only seeing us through the lens of what happened to us, rather than all of the other incredible things we are and what we are capable of’ (Eaton 2019).

## References and helpful links:

[SurvivorsUK: Breaking the Silence.](#)

[Victim Focus UK: Caring for yourself after sexual violence.](#)

[Rape Crisis England and Wales.](#)

[Juniper Lodge: Sexual assault referral centre.](#)

[Student Services: Student safety.](#)