What Should I Say?

When talking to someone who has experienced a traumatic event, some things you can say are more helpful than others. To support the person and validate his/her feelings, the following lists provide suggestions on what to say and what not to say to someone in crisis.

Do Say:

- I'm glad you're talking to me now

- I'm glad you're safe now (if true)

- It wasn't your fault

- Your reaction is a common response

- It's understandable you feel that way

- It must have been really upsetting to see/hear/feel/smell/etc. that

- You're not going crazy

- Things may not ever be the same, but they can get better

- It's OK to cry, want revenge, hate, etc.

- I can't imagine how terrible your experience must have been

- I'm sorry this happened to you

Don't Say:

- I know how you feel/I understand

- You're lucky that…

- It'll take some time, but you'll get over it/time heals all wounds

- Don't worry, it's going to be all right

- Out of tragedies, good things happen

- You shouldn't feel that way

- You should get on with your life/move on/get over it

- It was God's will

- Calm down and try to relax