

# **Coping with Trauma After Assault**

Experiencing sexual assault leaves deep emotional and psychological scars that cannot be ignored. Survivors often carry feelings of shame, fear, or guilt, even though none of these emotions should belong to them. The trauma is never the victim's fault. It is a result of someone else's decision to take away their control, and healing begins with reclaiming that sense of safety and self. Every young woman deserves the chance to recover without stigma, and every survivor has the right to be believed, supported, and respected.

One of the first steps in coping with trauma is learning grounding techniques. These are small actions that can bring a person back to the present when they feel overwhelmed by memories or flashbacks. Breathing slowly, focusing on the sensations in the room, or repeating comforting words can reduce anxiety in those intense moments. Survivors should never feel weak for using these techniques; they are powerful tools to manage stress and restore balance in daily life.

Another important method is journaling. Writing down feelings can provide an outlet that feels safe and private. Survivors may find it difficult to express their experiences out loud, but words on paper often feel less intimidating. Journaling can help track emotions, identify triggers, and remind a survivor of the progress they have made in their healing journey. Even short daily reflections can create a sense of stability and control during uncertain times.

Safe sharing is also crucial in coping with trauma. Survivors should have the opportunity to share their story, but only when and if they are ready. This might be through anonymous platforms, support groups, or trusted friends. Speaking out can help release the heavy weight of silence, but it must always happen at the survivor's own pace. No one should feel pressured to share before they are ready, and respecting personal boundaries is part of the healing process.

Just as survivors need coping strategies for themselves, friends and loved ones also play a key role in the recovery process. Supporting a survivor does not require giving perfect advice—it requires listening without judgment. Small actions like checking in, offering safe company, and reminding survivors that what happened was not their fault can make a huge difference. Avoid pushing them to talk before they are comfortable. Instead, create an environment where they know they are

cared for and believed. Sometimes, the greatest support is simply being there and respecting their choices.

In addition to personal strategies and supportive friends, survivors should know that professional help is available. Speaking with a therapist, counselor, or helpline worker can provide specialized guidance for managing trauma. In Türkiye, organizations such as Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı and Alo 183 offer resources to survivors of sexual assault. These resources exist to remind survivors that they are not alone, and reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

We are also a resource hoping to help women and girls in Istanbul. Our aim as “Our Voice, Our Horizon!” is to create a platform where women and girls in Istanbul can share their story, read articles on sexual assault and other topics revolving around women, find helplines, and learn about anonymous survivor’s stories, creating a safe space for women and girls.

Coping with trauma after assault is not a straight path, and each survivor’s journey is unique. There may be days of strength and days of struggle, but both are part of the process. What matters most is remembering that healing is possible, and no survivor has to walk this road alone. By practicing grounding techniques, journaling, and safe sharing, and by relying on supportive friends and professional resources, survivors can slowly reclaim their lives. Every step, no matter how small, is an act of resilience and courage.

## *Bibliography*

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