

Facilitator Guide



Thank you for taking the time to share Taylor the Turtle with your community. You already know much of the information in this package. We have simply put it altogether in one space. If you ever need any type of assistance please do not hesitate to call the Sexual Assault Centre at 519.751.3471. You always have the option of a worker from the Centre coming into your classroom to lead or co-lead the programme.

A couple of key items to remember:

- Acknowledge that sexual abuse happens in your community
- Provide positive role modeling
- As a teacher/worker understand the impact of experiences of sexual abuse on your students/client in regards to personal development, social interactions and academic achievements

If a you receive a disclosure find time to process your own feelings by talking with others or calling the 24 hour support line at the Sexual Assault Centre at 519.751.3471

Provide opportunities for the following:

- Celebrate diversity even if that diversity is not represented in your classroom
- Offer Student choice (differentiated learning strategies)
- Use of language of options/choice
- Self expression in visual arts, language, music, drama, gym
- Emotional literacy
- Empathy building

As a caring adult you have an important role in the life of the person you care for, whether that person is a child or an adult with an

intellectual disability. Your role is irreplaceable because that person counts on you, trusts you and may one day chose you as the person to whom they tell something really important. Being a caring adult is a great privilege and a huge responsibility.

If the person you care for chooses to disclose an experience of sexual abuse to you, it may be hard to remember that you are in a privileged position. Nothing prepares us for hearing this information first hand, however much training or experience we have.

Feelings of fear, inadequacy, anger, shock, disbelief, horror can overwhelm us and can make it difficult to find the words to support, encourage, and problem solve with the person you care for.

Let the person you care for know you believe them with simple statements such as **“I believe you”**. One of the biggest fears of people who have been sexually abused/assaulted is that no one will understand them or believe them.

Reassure the person you care about that you are not mad and that you are happy that they came to you. Say **“I am happy that you think of me as someone you can trust. I want to help you as much as I can”**. Many children and adults with intellectual disabilities are really worried about the caring adults in their lives being angry with them or disappointed in them.

Be very clear that what happened to the person you care for was NOT their fault. They did NOT cause the abuse.

Emphasize that they are not alone in their experience and that this has happened to other people. You can also draw on the fact that other people have got help and been safe and eventually felt better.

Acknowledge the courage and strength it took to share their experience(s). **“I am very proud of you. It took a lot of courage to share this with me today. And I am very thankful that you did”.**

Do not make promises that you cannot keep. Let the person you care for know you will do everything you can to help and support them. Be clear that you cannot guarantee anything. **“I am not sure what will happen next. Let’s find out together and I will help you as much as I can.”**

Introduce the idea of community support. This will reduce your feelings of isolation and assist the person you care for in understanding that you are not their only source of help.

Be honest if you have a mandated responsibility to report (as is the case with all forms of child abuse and if you are working in a care setting with intellectually disabled adults). You can say **“We have to get ready to let some helpers at (name agency) know about what you told me. Let’s talk about how that is going to happen.”**

Do not make assumptions about how the child or intellectually disabled adult is feeling. Instead leave things as open as possible, try saying “You are probably having a lot of feelings right now, would you like to talk about some of them?” Furthermore, avoid interpreting their experiences for them. If someone says they are angry, don’t tell them you know why that would be, even if you think you have a clear sense of where it is coming from.

Use personal experiences to illustrate the ideas you are talking about. For example, if the person you care for is feeling so angry they don’t know what you can do, you can share your own story by saying “Remember when the window got broken? I was so mad I had to go scream in a pillow before I could talk about it.” Emphasize that you are ready to deal with feelings and that it is important not to bottle them up.

Avoid ‘why’ questions. Survivors of sexual violence can interpret these as victim blaming.

When introducing the topic of informing the police be extremely clear about the reasons why police need to become involved. This is especially if the person you care for is from a neighbourhood with heavy police presence. “I am so proud of you for sharing your story with me. It is my job to help you be safe and get help. The police may be able to help you too. You are not in trouble.”



For further information on sexual abuse, disclosures, and a suggested book list please see www.taylorsrights.ca or call the Sexual Assault Centre at 519.751.3471.