

Listening Session Handout – Law Enforcement Session

If someone chooses to disclose to you that they have been raped or sexually assaulted (great 3 steps for anyone to practice, not just law enforcement):

-**LISTEN** (Don't talk over them. Listen to what they are telling you.)

-**BELIEVE** (It is very hard to come forward, and it can be traumatizing in itself. They are not gaining anything from lying.)

-**REACT** (Be supportive. Show concern. If appropriate, outrage on their behalf. Read the situation. They need to know that they have your support and help. Offer resources: STAR, etc.)

Suggestions for Law Enforcement:

- Better training is needed for those working rape cases and those interacting with survivors. Whatever training is currently in place is not enough. Training needs to be:

- MANDATORY
- Comprehensive
- Taken VERY SERIOUSLY: **Louisiana is 3rd in the nation for domestic homicides of women killed by men**, and those are not isolated incidents. Those are patterns.
- Training needs to be applied EVERY TIME in the field and while working the case.

Take away from my experience:

- Do not give survivors of rape false hope or incorrect information when working their case. Our legal system is not set up to easily or genuinely help survivors of rape, and it needs to change. If you are not going to put in the work and fight within the system to help the survivor whose case you are working, you don't need to be working their case. If nothing else, oversee the transfer of their case to someone who **will** work with them, and maintain clear communication to the survivor throughout the process.

Recommended reading to help gain perspective, for law enforcement and for ANYONE who will be interacting with survivors of rape and sexual assault:

"**Exit, Pursued by a Bear**" by E.K. Johnston - Written as a personal account of a woman who is raped and gets the help she needs from law enforcement, her family, and her community.

"**Speak**" by Laurie Halse Anderson - Written as a personal account of a woman who is raped and does **not** get the help and support that she needs from law enforcement, her family, or her community.

Both of these are EXCELLENT books, great reads just on their own, that can be found in the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble.

Thank you for Listening.

- Laura