

Emotions are not Behaviours

Even emotions you think are negative are perfectly normal and you have the right to explore and express them. For example, anger as an emotion is normal, healthy, and often justified, and should not be avoided. However, the behaviours we may use to demonstrate anger can be destructive to ourselves and those around us. Finding healthy ways to express emotions will help you work through the range of emotions you may experience. Some things you could try are exercise, letter writing, or something creative like painting. Journaling can help you identify how you feel; and how you feel about feeling. Over time your counsellor will help you develop a whole range of strategies that will help you on your journey.

Have Hope

You won't always feel the way you do right now. Healing from trauma takes time and at GCCASV we believe that hope is an important part of the healing process. Hope is recognising that there is life after sexual violence and knowing and believing that a better future is around the corner. Ask for a copy of the HOPE resource to assist you in your healing journey.

Counselling provides a safe place to
release and explore emotions.



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What Now?



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Making Sense of Emotions

Now that you've started counselling you may be feeling a bit overwhelmed or even finding it difficult to connect with what you feel. It is normal for the early stages of counselling to feel challenging. If you've been suppressing or avoiding your feelings up until now it can be difficult, and even scary, to suddenly start to feel.

SO, WHAT NOW?

Be kind to yourself!

You are doing fine and just because you have started counselling doesn't mean you suddenly have to deal with everything you feel. It takes time to identify and release emotion.

You don't have to feel all the time!

It is ok if you aren't ready and there may even be times when you will need to suppress what is happening to help you get through the day. Use this as a short-term strategy until you can create a safe place to explore your feelings. Utilise relaxation as a way to separate yourself from emotions. Try to work out what kind of environments help you feel safe.

Sit with the feeling!

Learning to understand what is happening in your body when you have different feelings will help you process them. It might just mean you need to acknowledge the presence of a feeling and try to sit with it until you are ready to let it go.

Realise your power!

It is time to recognise the power and control you have. You are stronger than you think. Coming along to your first appointment was you taking control. Another kind of control you will learn is releasing emotions. At first, the emotions might seem overwhelming. As you learn to understand the emotions better you can release them in a way that feels empowering to you.

The experience and impacts of sexual violence are different for everyone but whatever your reaction, it is a normal response to an extreme emotional and physical violation.

Your counsellor will work with you to develop tools for re-establishing control in your life. You will also work on strategies to help you interact with your environment in a healthy way that works for you. Be flexible and set small goals to track your progress. Some people find it useful to focus on times when they felt grounded and balanced and recreate some of those things on the days they are struggling.

IMPACTS OF TRAUMA



The above diagram lists some of the impacts of experiencing a traumatic event such as sexual violence. It is normal to feel all of these, some of these, or none of these.

Feeling Triggered

Movies, TV, and social media can all contain content that might trigger negative reactions. These responses might include anxiety, sadness, numbness and flashbacks. It can help to check the ratings and warnings of content to help you decide. Remember you are in control and at times you may need to turn it off or walk away for a bit.

Social media can be a bit trickier. Many people find it helpful to find others who have had similar experiences. Sharing stories can be a powerful part of healing and gives survivors a voice. However, sharing or reading about other people's experiences can cause anxiety or bring up emotions that you weren't ready for.

Talking to your counsellor is a good way to work out what might be triggering for you.

