

Victims of Violence are Supported and Guided— and Allowed to Make Their Own Decisions

Nineteen-year-old Stacy* never thought she would be standing here this Monday morning, or any morning. When she was greeted by Belinda*, the Community Victim Service Worker at Haven Society, she felt like running out the door. As soon as she was seated in Belinda's office, the emotional dam she had been carefully containing overflowed.

Stacy disclosed that she was sexually assaulted at a friend's party over the weekend. She hadn't told anyone about it. She was scared to report the incident to the RCMP because she didn't know if anyone would believe her and she didn't know what would happen next.

Belinda told Stacy that it took a lot of courage to come to Haven and share such a personal story with a stranger. She thanked Stacy for trusting her, and reminded her that all information she shared was confidential.

The process for reporting the incident to the RCMP was explained, and Belinda reassured the young woman that it was up to her to decide what to do. Haven's Responder Program could also assign a volunteer to support Stacy during a medical appointment with a forensic nurse at the hospital, if she chose to go.

"To be honest, I felt like running away when I first got here," Stacy confided, "but I'm glad I didn't. You've made what was a really scary thought much less scary. I'm not sure yet if I'm going to report it, but I think I will go see the forensic nurse at the hospital in case."

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A few weeks later, Stacy came back to Haven to tell Belinda that, thanks to the gentle and respectful guidance and support she had received from her, the Responder volunteer and the forensic nurse, she had felt safe reporting the incident. Stacy thanked Belinda for standing by her side and for allowing her to make her own decisions, validating her ability to move forward and to heal.

* For privacy reasons, this story and all names are fictional, but it represents the experiences of our clients.