

# AFTER HUMAN TRAFFICKING & TRAUMA

A Recovery Guide for Survivors

YWCA SILICON VALLEY 24/7/365

SUPPORT LINE: 1(800) 572-2782

eliminating racism  
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Silicon Valley



YWCA Silicon Valley hopes that this guide will help those who have experienced human trafficking. YWCA Silicon Valley, Support Services offers free individual and group counseling, workshops, legal advocacy, and additional information for survivors of human trafficking and their loved ones.

If at any time you are reading this packet and you would like additional support or have questions about our services, you can call the YWCA Silicon Valley 24/7/365 Support Line at 1(800) 572-2782. Our state-certified counselors are available for confidential conversations.



## **YOU HAVE SURVIVED A TRAUMA**

After trauma from human trafficking, it may be hard to know how to react or what to do. Trauma can interrupt your daily life, including at work, at school, at home, or relationships with others. You may be hurt physically, emotionally, spiritually or feel unsure of what to do next. Learning more about the facts around human trafficking and available resources can help ground you and help you plan what you'd like to do next.

Healing is a journey taken one step and one day at a time. Find strength in knowing that you are not alone; others have been here too. People react differently to trauma; this healing process can look different for everyone. This process is often slow and confusing, however, with understanding and persistence you can accomplish a great deal. You can reach out to someone who is able to offer you support- whether it be a spiritual advisor, friend, family member, a safe adult, or therapist. You have control over how you heal, and there is no timeline for healing.

The reassurance and support of friends, family, or significant others is very important during this time, and at the same time, their reaction to your experience may not be what you anticipate or would like it to be. People in your life will react in different ways; some may express blame, others may give you their full support. If you feel ready, you should allow those who offer their support to help you through this period—it will aid you in your recovery process. However, it is 100% up to you when and if you would like to talk about your experience. You do not have to share your experience with anyone until you feel ready. Most of all, it's important to remember that **what happened to you is not your fault**. This guide can help you to begin sorting out your emotions and concerns, understand the facts surrounding human trafficking, and provide additional resources for you.

## **WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND TRAUMA?**

Trauma is the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter your sense of security, making you feel helpless in a dangerous world. Traumatic experiences often involve a threat to life but any situation that leaves you feeling overwhelmed can be traumatic, even if it doesn't involve physical harm.

One way someone can experience trauma can be through human trafficking. Human trafficking consists of one person or group of people benefiting from another person, through fraud, coercion, and/or force.

Cases that are considered severe forms of trafficking in persons involve three elements:

1. **ACTION.** This may be the recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing, or obtaining of an individual. Additional actions that constitute sex trafficking, but not labor trafficking, include patronizing, soliciting, and advertising an individual.
2. **MEANS OF FORCE, FRAUD, OR COERCION.** Examples of force include physical abuse or assault, sexual abuse or assault, or confinement. Examples of fraud include false promises of work/living conditions, withholding promised wages, or contract fraud. Coercion may include threats of harm to self or others, debt bondage, psychological manipulation, or document confiscation.
3. **FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE.** Either via compelled labor, services, or commercial sex act(s).

\*In sex trafficking cases involving children under the age of 18, it is not necessary to demonstrate force, fraud, or coercion.

Some survivors of human trafficking have been taken advantage of in two general methods: through labor or sexual activity. This can include sexual acts performed without consent, forced work, or commercial sexual exploitation for the benefit of the trafficker or others.

*\*For more information about California's definitions, check California Penal Code Section 236-237.*

## **CONSENT**

Consent is a clear, willing, enthusiastic, and ongoing "yes" to different types of sexual activity. In order to be able to give consent, the people involved have to be 18 years or older (in the state of California), not under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and have the mental capacity to give consent.

In addition, saying "yes" to one type of sexual activity doesn't automatically mean someone is consenting to another type of sexual activity. Someone cannot give consent under coercion, including emotional, physical, and/or psychological manipulation, pressure, or force. This includes intimidation and threats to another person and/or their loved ones.

## **YOUR RIGHTS**

### **YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- Be believed.
- Be given the same credibility as any other crime victim.
- Seek help.
- Courteous, efficient treatment.
- Be treated with dignity and respect, without prejudice against race, ethnicity, class, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, or occupation.
- Comprehensive, accurate information, presented in a way that they can understand.
- Ask questions.
- Make your own decisions.
- Change their mind and be in control of their healing process, whatever that may look like.
- Have help and support from others.
- Heal from their trauma at their own pace.
- Get paid for your work (at least minimum wage).
- Choose your occupation.
- Change your employment.

### **SURVIVORS CHOOSING TO REPORT, HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- File a complaint for violations of wage and hour laws; contact the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor at (866) 487-9243.
- File a complaint for violations of anti-discrimination laws, contact the EEOC at 1-800-669-4000.
- You have the right to report any unfair actions inflicted upon you through employment.
- If you are a survivor of maltreatment in the work place, you have the right to apply for a T Visa, if you are in need of immigration relief.
  - T Visa provides immigration relief to survivors that have been taken advantage of in the work place.
- You have the right to report any type violence affecting you.
  - If you are reporting a sexual assault you have a right to a SART/ SAFE Exam (also known as rape kits), an advocate to be present at any evidentiary, medical or physical exam or interview by law enforcement authorities or district attorneys, confidentiality with an Advocate and Victim Assistance Compensation

- If you are reporting violence used against you, you have the right to a temporary and long term restraining order, U Visa, and Victim Assistance Compensation.
  - U Visas are issued to individuals who have suffered substantial physical or mental abuse as a result of being a victim of certain crimes designated by the TVPA, including trafficking, that violate domestic laws or occurred while in the United States.

## RESPONSE TO TRAUMA

### POSSIBLE RESPONSES TO TRAUMA

Pain	Changes in eating pattern	Dissociation	Fear
Changes in sleeping pattern	Nightmares	Self-harm	Suicidality
Muscle tension	Flashbacks	Feeling dirty	Anxiety
Fatigue	Gynecological issues	Irritability	Relief
Preoccupation with safety	Grief	Shock/numbness	Denial
Substance abuse	Changes in perception of their world	Feeling loss of control over one's life	Frustration
Depression	Shame	Guilt	Loss of trust
Apprehension	Indecision	Crying or inability to cry	Feeling "crazy"
Feeling stuck	Anger	Sexual reactivity	STI/STD
Feeling like a burden	PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)	Confusion	Self-blame

Your response to trauma from human trafficking may cover a wide range of physical and emotional symptoms, even some which may not seem to result directly from the assault. You may experience these symptoms immediately or later in your life, or you may never experience any of them. Every survivor responds differently. You may even experience some symptoms that are not on this list. These are also responses we may see in people who have experienced other types of trauma, and it's important to remember that *these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation*.

Human trafficking can have a profound and long-lasting impact on victims. The trauma that victims often experience manifests in different ways and may result in a host of physical and psychological symptoms, including memory loss, inability of the body to self-regulate, and drastic changes in behavior.

### POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

If you have experienced trauma, you may feel stress, anxiety, and/or other negative emotions. If these and other symptoms last for more than a few weeks or disrupt your daily life, it might be a condition called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD can occur when people experience terrifying situations that they cannot control. Trauma symptoms can include all of the responses listed above, as well as responses not on this list. These symptoms can intrude into your daily life and prevent you from working, maintaining

relationships, or completing everyday tasks. They can be extreme some days and not as extreme other days.

People experience different symptoms of PTSD, but the three main symptoms of PTSD include:\*

- **Re-experiencing:** feeling like you are reliving the event through flashbacks, intrusive dreams, or intrusive thoughts.
- **Avoidance:** intentionally or subconsciously changing your behavior to avoid scenarios associated with the event or losing interest in activities you used to enjoy.
- **Hyper-arousal:** feeling “on edge” all of the time, having difficulty sleeping, being easily startled, or prone to sudden outbursts.

\*Citation: “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” | RAINN.” N.p., n.d. 2016.

If you feel this is happening, you may want to seek help and learn more about PTSD. A counselor can help you identify and overcome PTSD. It’s important to remember that PTSD is a normal reaction to a traumatic event.

## **SELF-CARE AFTER HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Taking care of oneself means exercising, eating healthy foods, eliminating addictions, getting a good night’s sleep, staying present in one’s body, and letting go of abuse/abusive people. This also includes learning to set healthy boundaries, saying no when needed, and not feeling responsible for another person’s feelings or actions. This is a process that begins with self-love.

Trauma can cause disruptions in your physical and emotional health, and it is important to take care of yourself. Self-care simply means taking care of your physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being and needs. Practicing self-care is helpful and healthy for everyone, and it is especially helpful for those who have experienced trauma. Here are some examples of ways to practice self-care:

### **1. WHAT SMALL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE**

- Reconnect with loved ones.
- Don’t minimize your trauma: what you went through was hard and no one can define your experience.
- You decide what to call your experience. Some individuals will define themselves as a victim or survivor.
- Hold others accountable; what happened to you was not your fault.
- Connect with professionals that empower and encourage your healing journey. (read more below)

### **2. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF PHYSICALLY**

**Get a medical check-up.** The idea of seeing a doctor may seem unpleasant, but it is important for you to see a medical professional. Medical attention may help your immediate physical health and could prevent further damage to your wellbeing. Discuss any medical concerns you have with you doctor. If you do not want to report a sexual assault, but want to seek medical care, it is important to know that doctors and medical care practitioners are required by law to report a known or suspected incidence of violence. It could be an option to tell them something along the lines of: “I had rough, unprotected sex, and I want to be checked medically.”

**Take care of your overall physical health.** This can include establishing a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables, following a regular sleep pattern to provide your body with rest, and establishing an exercise routine that serves your body. Physical activity in particular can be a great

stress-reducer, even a short walk. It's also a way to re-connect with your body after a traumatic incident.

For some survivors in particular, self-injury can be a coping mechanism, a way to relieve stress and anxiety, and a way of communicating when words are not available. The first step in eliminating self-harm is acknowledging the denial, becoming conscious of the self-harm and then removing the triggers.

The next step is to substitute self-harm with self-care. Once a survivor understands how and when this behavior occurs, it can then be talked about, drawn, sung, or journal led, and then the pressure to act physically may well diminish.

***Allow time for adequate amounts of rest and relaxation.*** Some techniques to consider are meditation, deep breathing, listening to music, going to a nature park, reading, religious rituals, or anything that grounds and relaxes you.

***Develop a routine that is comfortable for you and has a positive outcome.*** Coping means different things to different people. Having a routine can be very stabilizing in the face of traumatic stress.

### **3. TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF EMOTIONALLY**

Writing to vent anger can release repressed feelings and can also help a person to better understand what they are feeling at that given moment. Writing letters to the abusers, but not always sending them can help the survivor get in touch with the rage and why this happened to them. Another way of releasing anger is writing all the incidents of the abuse that happened, dealing with those feelings, and then with witnesses, burn the writings outdoors.

Some survivors did not have a supportive upbringing and experienced child abuse at home. These survivors may have a hard time learning what healthy love may look like within relationships. Self-care for these individual would look like: learning healthy relationships, how to identify unhealthy behaviors, and parenting skills. This gives a better perspective of a normal family upbringing.

Many survivors feel isolated in the aftermath of trauma. In order to reduce those feelings, reach out for support to those who are close to you: call family members, friends, or a counselor. It might help you feel better to have someone to talk to, and you might want people around so that you feel safe. You can also practice self-care and incorporate it into your daily life to increase your overall well-being. Additionally, asking for support from friends and family as social contact can make you feel less isolated and more connected. Supportive listeners can include: friends; family; religious leaders; teachers; professional counselors; or counseling groups.

***Consider professional support or counseling.*** Having someone to talk to about how you are feeling may help you to deal with the emotions you are experiencing. Additionally, a counselor can help you express your needs to others and explain how to get those needs met. Recognize that your trauma is likely to also affect others around you and that their reactions may vary. However, you're allowed to prioritize your own health and safety.

***Remember, self-care practices can be simple, and everyone will have a different way and preference of taking care of themselves.***

## **COUNSELING**

Trauma can change your feelings about yourself and those around you. You may not feel the way you did before the trauma – physically, emotionally, socially, or sexually. Counseling can help you deal with these issues and aid in your healing. *YWCA Silicon Valley offers a variety of counseling services in English and Spanish. Our Crisis Support Services crisis counselors offer crisis counseling and support groups, and our Healing Center offers individual, trauma-informed therapy and group therapy.* Our counselors will listen, clarify, support, and explore options with you. Group counseling will give you the opportunity to share your feelings with other survivors and provides an environment in which survivors can share their experiences along with their techniques for healing.

**It's important to remember that healing is a process, and this process looks different for everyone. Healing is not linear, and all survivors deserve support and access to resources. For more information, or if you have any questions, please call YWCA Silicon Valley 24/7/365 Support Line at 1(800) 572-2782.**

## **HOW TO CONTACT THE YWCA SILICON VALLEY**

YWCA Silicon Valley's mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. YWCA Silicon Valley Support Services Department provides free, confidential services for survivors of sexual violence, domestic/intimate partner violence, and human trafficking. We serve people of all identities.

## **KNOW WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE**

Survivors have the right to an advocate and support person of their choosing while going through all legal and evidentiary proceedings including: SART exam, or also known as a "rape kit" or forensic medical exam; police interviews; court hearings; and criminal investigation (Penal Code #264.2 and #679.04). YWCA Silicon Valley offers trained, confidential sexual assault counselors to act as an advocate and support person. Advocates can meet with you, as well as maintain contact with police investigators and district attorneys to help track cases as they make their way through the criminal justice process. Information shared between an advocate and survivor is confidential and considered a privileged communication unless there are cases of danger to self, danger to others, and/or child abuse (Evidence Code #1035.4).

### Legal Advocacy

Whether or not you choose to report the assault and/or move forward with an investigation, you deserve support and to know about the range of services available to you. You have the right to be notified of criminal justice proceedings against the accused if you decide to move forward with an investigation, and you may submit a victim impact statement when the defendant is sentenced. The Santa Clara County Victim Services Unit may be able to reimburse you for your direct out-of-pocket expenses caused by the crime.

To make an appointment or if you have any questions about the services listed below, call the YWCA Silicon Valley 24/7/365 Support Line at 1(800) 572-2782.

SAN JOSE LOCATION	SUNNYVALE LOCATION
<p><b>Linda Haskell Empowerment Center</b> 375 South Third Street San Jose CA 95112 T: 408.295.4011 <a href="http://www.ywca-sv.org">www.ywca-sv.org</a></p> <p>Hours: Monday – Friday, 9 AM – 5 PM (Walk-In) Appointments during the week also available</p> <p><b>Services include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisis Support<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Walk-In Crisis Support &amp; Safety Planning</li><li>○ 24/7 Support Line, 1(800) 572-2782</li><li>○ Short-Term Crisis Counseling and Support Groups for survivors of Sexual Assault &amp; Domestic Violence</li></ul></li><li>• Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Long Term Advocacy &amp; Case Management</li><li>○ Accompaniment for SART exam</li><li>○ Accompaniment to court and law enforcement interviews</li><li>○ Restraining Orders</li></ul></li><li>• Long Term, Trauma-Informed Clinical Counseling through the Healing Center</li><li>• Education &amp; Outreach Programming<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ School presentations</li><li>○ Community workshops</li></ul></li><li>• Emergency Shelter &amp; Rapid Re-Housing</li><li>• TechGyrls Programming</li><li>• Childcare Centers</li></ul>	<p><b>Sunnyvale Satellite Office</b> 298 S. Sunnyvale Ave, Sunnyvale, CA 94086 T: 408.749.0793</p> <p>Hours: Monday – Thursday, 9 AM – 5 PM (By Appointment Only)</p> <p>North County/Sunnyvale Family Justice Center Open for Walk-Ins on FRIDAYS between 9 AM – 5 PM.</p> <p><b>Services include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• North County/Sunnyvale Family Justice Center<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Legal advice in family law and immigration, including assistance with U-Visa applications</li><li>○ Restraining orders</li><li>○ Opportunity to speak with law enforcement investigators who specialize in DV and stalking</li><li>○ Access to probation officers who can provide information about the perpetrator’s probation status</li><li>○ Access to prosecutors from the Santa Clara County District Attorney’s Office to discuss criminal justice process and status of pending cases</li></ul></li><li>• Advocacy services by appointment, including: safety planning, referrals to 24-hour emergency shelters, assistance to victims with processing restitution applications, and more</li></ul> <p>Short-Term Crisis Counseling and Support Groups for survivors of Sexual Assault &amp; Domestic Violence</p>

<b>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:</b>		
<b>BeFree Textline</b>	Text HELP to 233733 (BEFREE)	<b>Confidential</b> <b>Hours of operation: 12pm – 8pm PST</b>
<b>National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline</b>	1 (888) 373-7888	
<b>National Sexual Assault Hotline</b>	1(800) 656-HOPE (4673)	<a href="https://hotline.rainn.org/online/terms-of-service.jsp">https://hotline.rainn.org/online/terms-of-service.jsp</a>
<b>National Street Harassment Hotline</b>	<b>English and Spanish:</b> 1(855) 897-5910	
<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline</b>	<b>Interpreter services available in 170 languages:</b> 1(800) 799-SAFE (7233)	
<b>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline</b>	<b>English</b> 1(800) 273-TALK (8255) <b>(Spanish):</b> 1(888) 628-9454	