



Survivor Input on Offender Behavior

What does healing look like to you? What does justice look like to you? Related to their offender, respondents said healing and justice was:

- 35% said legal consequences (jail, arrest, probation/supervision)
“I just wish he would at least have had to do the jail time he deserved, wear the ankle monitor, and do the probation he was required...”
- 33% said behavior change for the abuser (counseling, education, treatment, won't harm anyone else)
“One thing that really bothered me is there was no support for the potential perpetrator and that felt negligent – it puts the position in position to cause further harm. In any of these processes, whether in criminal justice or restorative justice or in college, the perpetrator needs counseling. IF that is successful, that feels like justice.”
- 16% said distance from the abuser (to not see them again)
“I still don't have a parenting plan, which I need to get child support. But I don't want to have contact with him.”
- 14% said an acknowledgement of harm by the abuser (apologize, admit the harm done)
“There's so much to healing, too...Being able to talk with the person who harmed me and them at no point justifying or blaming me for or defending what happened. Not having to feel fear that I would be dismissed or told that what I experienced wasn't the true reality of what happened.”
- 7% said reparations by the abuser
“There is definitely a place for reparations, too, maybe covering the cost of therapy for the victim.”

If other people knew about your situation, how did they react? Do you feel like they supported you, or supported the person who harmed you?

- 47% said that people were supportive of the offender (often by shielding them from accountability)

“I reported his suicidal text to the counselor. She told me not to break up with him right away even though he had assaulted me. They put him first.”

- 42% said people were supportive in a way that met the survivor’s needs

“When my mom found out she supported me. It was kind of the breaking point for me to make him leave.”

- 28% said that people tried to be supportive but it wasn’t helpful or it was harmful

“...Some friends/neighbor confronted my abusive husband without asking me first. That was well-intentioned but set me up for more abuse in reaction – it really escalated the situation.”

- 17% said people tried to stay neutral or uninvolved

“There were a lot of times when I was in his apartment...and he had two roommates who would witness what he did to me, or would witness me leaving his room super upset, and it was like they didn’t see anything ever.”

- 11% said no support was available

“I didn’t have support.”

What was harmful in support for you? In how they interacted with the person who caused harm?

- 22% said a focus on minimizing the consequences for the abuser (eg protecting the abuser’s reputation)

“...it’s been interesting the amount of people who with this story respond to this by being concerned about him, and what would

happen to his reputation. It's interesting to have me share what happened that was hurtful, and they focus on the hypothetical hurt that this other person might experience."

- 17% said they faced additional forms of discrimination
"It was so hard to understand the system because of my language and culture and being a woman alone in a house taking care of the family, because I have no social security card."
- 10% said facing additional violence
"Mostly people supported him, all his friends, the friends we both had, his family. They slashed my tires because he went to jail. I still get hate messages from them."
- 10% said having consequences to the survivor for their self-protection or retaliation
"I also ended up going to jail because I retaliated to get away from her. I had a DV charge and wasn't able to get a job because of it...I can get it expunged but it would cost me..."

Do you feel like the person who hurt you took responsibility for what they did?

- 74% said no, their abuser did not take responsibility; 19% said yes, 5% were unsure, and 2% said "kind of"

What did that look like, or what could it have looked like?

- 57% said communication of meaningful acknowledgement and validation by the abuser
"That would be a relief. They would come forward and say, 'I'm sorry I did this' or not even I'm sorry, just, 'I did this.' You're admitting to a crime, to a problem YOU have. That would alleviate a lot of pain and help me heal. That would practically stop my spinning head and all these problems."
- 36% said communication of a genuine, meaningful apology by the abuser

“He’d say, ‘That was messed up. I did this really harmful thing and I’m sorry. Having a genuine recognition and apology.’”

- 24% said educational/therapeutic action for the abuser

“Getting help and healing themselves and their own trauma.”

- 19% said they want to have trust in the safety of themselves and others (the abuser doesn’t harm them or anyone else)

“He made a promise to himself and to me that it will never happen again. It took a while to get there.”

- 12% said punitive action by/for the abuser

“I felt like he took responsibility when he pled guilty. Because he pled guilty to a felony...He did the time in jail.”

- 12% said they don’t want (or haven’t had) any communication

“I’m perfectly content to never see them again.”

- 5% said communication by answering the survivor’s questions

“I would have liked more information from him. I have so many questions, so many holes in my recollection. I would like to know what his experience was.”

Do you think the person who harmed you could change their behavior? If so, what do you think could change their behavior? What would that behavior change look like?

- 45% said they did not think their abuser could change their behavior; 45% thought their abuser could change their behavior; and 11% were unsure

In response to what could elicit change in the abuser:

- 26% said a change in personal mindset (thinking about it differently)

“There were a lot of things that showed he’d changed. He told me he did not want to lose me. What he’s allowed me to read in his book, ‘I want to be a better husband, I want to be a better father.’”

- 26% said educational and therapeutic support
“They would definitely need a lot of mental health support. They would need to get sober and get therapy for trauma.”
- 21% said punitive consequences
“I think going to jail might have changed their behavior. He was really set in his ways, needed control all the time. In jail you can’t do that.”
- 21% said an environmental change (such as being away from the influence of others)
“Also, hanging out with different people. A lot of the people he hangs out with have a lot of the same issues. That can be very telling.”
- 13% said a cultural or systems shift
“So it would help to...set up the norm that we don’t tolerate abusive behavior as a culture. We need a culture shift towards supporting survivors and not condoning abuse.”
- 5% said structural support for the abuser (money, housing, parenting classes)
“They would need economic support and housing support...Also medical care.”

In response to **what change would look like in the abuser:**

- 23% said change in how the abuser treats others
“The change would look like waiting for enthusiastic consent.”
- 16% said change in how the abuser treats their children
“He was there for the birth of the baby. He stayed and helped out with all the kids, not just the two we have in common...”
- 13% said communication
“He is normally very quiet and withdrawn but he looked me in the eyes, which is a big deal for him, and he cried when he apologized. He’s only cried three times since I’ve known him, and that was one of them.”

- 11% said accessing services

“I would hear and see that they were...engaging in these different support systems...”

- 8% said change in how the abuser treats the survivor

“I wanted to make sure things were going to be different...We built up trust using [a location tracking app]...He was willing to do these things without me having to ask...He’d let me know the DV stuff he was doing...That was behavior he wasn’t exhibiting before.”

If you could use a magic wand, what could have been asked of the person who caused harm?

- 75% said the abuser would change their behavior and not do it to anyone else
- 65% said the abuser would have admitted the impact of what they did
- 54% said the abuser would have apologized
- 47% said the abuser would have been required to go to therapy/classes
- 40% said the abuser wouldn’t have been allowed to go some places
- 35% said the abuser would have been arrested
- 33% said they would have gotten a protection order against the abuser
- 33% said the abuser would have lost some social status/power/economic power
- 28% said the abuser would have had jail time
- 21% said family and friends would have chosen not to spend time with the abuser any more
- 21% said the abuser was removed from campus/school

If you needed to continue to interact with and/or be in the same place as the person who harmed you (e.g. have kids together, are in the same class or campus, work together, go to the same faith community, live in the same neighborhood, go to the same coffeeshop) – what would have helped you to feel safer in those places?

- 35% said not being alone with the other person
“I would have friends around me if there was any place I suspected he would be.”
- 32% said parameters or rules about being in the same place
“And I make a boundary for myself, so I just don’t go there...I just remove myself. Ideally they would have to be removed but that would stir up so much and would make it so much harder and it doesn’t feel realistic.”
- 24% said they (the survivor) would continue to experience fear or anxiety despite planning
“..it was always in the back of my head, because I don’t know where his head space is at, he could be tracking me still.”
- 15% said therapy or treatment for the person who caused harm
“I want him to go through drug and alcohol treatment, to show he is a safe person.”
- 9% said safety planning regarding shared children (eg supervised visits, using only written communication)
“If our kids have to interact with him, I want it supervised.”

Background

In the summer and fall of 2022, the S/DV Commission sought feedback from survivors of domestic and sexual violence. We did semi-structured interviews and surveys with more than 40 survivors, after which we conducted thematic analysis of the responses and developed this

survivor input report. This feedback was gathered and analyzed in conjunction with and under the guidance of Dr. Christina Byrne, a researcher and psychology professor at Western Washington University.

In the interviews and surveys, survivors shared their experiences, what justice and healing could look like for them, and their feedback about restorative justice processes.

Survivors described experiences that included:

- One-time violence and persistent, on-going violence
- Lethal physical violence and severe emotional abuse
- Abuse that lasted for months, years, and decades
- Sexual violence experiences across the lifespan
- Sexual violence committed by trusted adults, friends, partners, neighbors, and dates
- Manipulation and coercion as a part of domestic violence (30%) and sexual assault (16%)
- Abusers using children to manipulate and abuse the survivor (19%)
- Retaliation from the abuser and from the broader community
- Systems responses that helped (17%), systems responses that compounded harm (17%), and systems that were absent or inaccessible
- Co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness
- Repeated victimization experiences, by the same abuser (77%) and by different abusers (30%)

“As this was happening to my body, I had a thought that I joined the many generations of women that I come from, in this culture.”

Read the full report [on our website](#).