



Training on Victim Care

**Victim care and effective
communication**



Why this matters

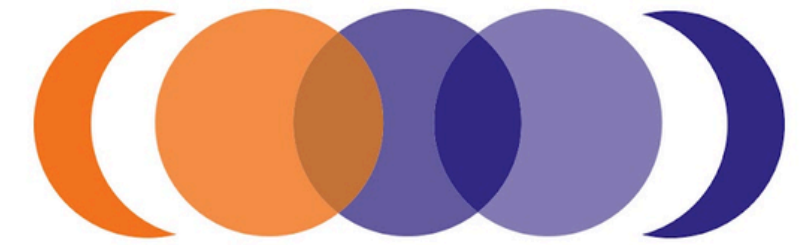


Introduction

Training objectives

- Respond to victims in a way that is empathetic, safe, and respectful.
- Avoid unintentional harm caused by miscommunication or misunderstandings.
- Protect both the victim and yourself by following clear procedures and maintaining boundaries.





The role of VSE staff in victim engagement



Module 1

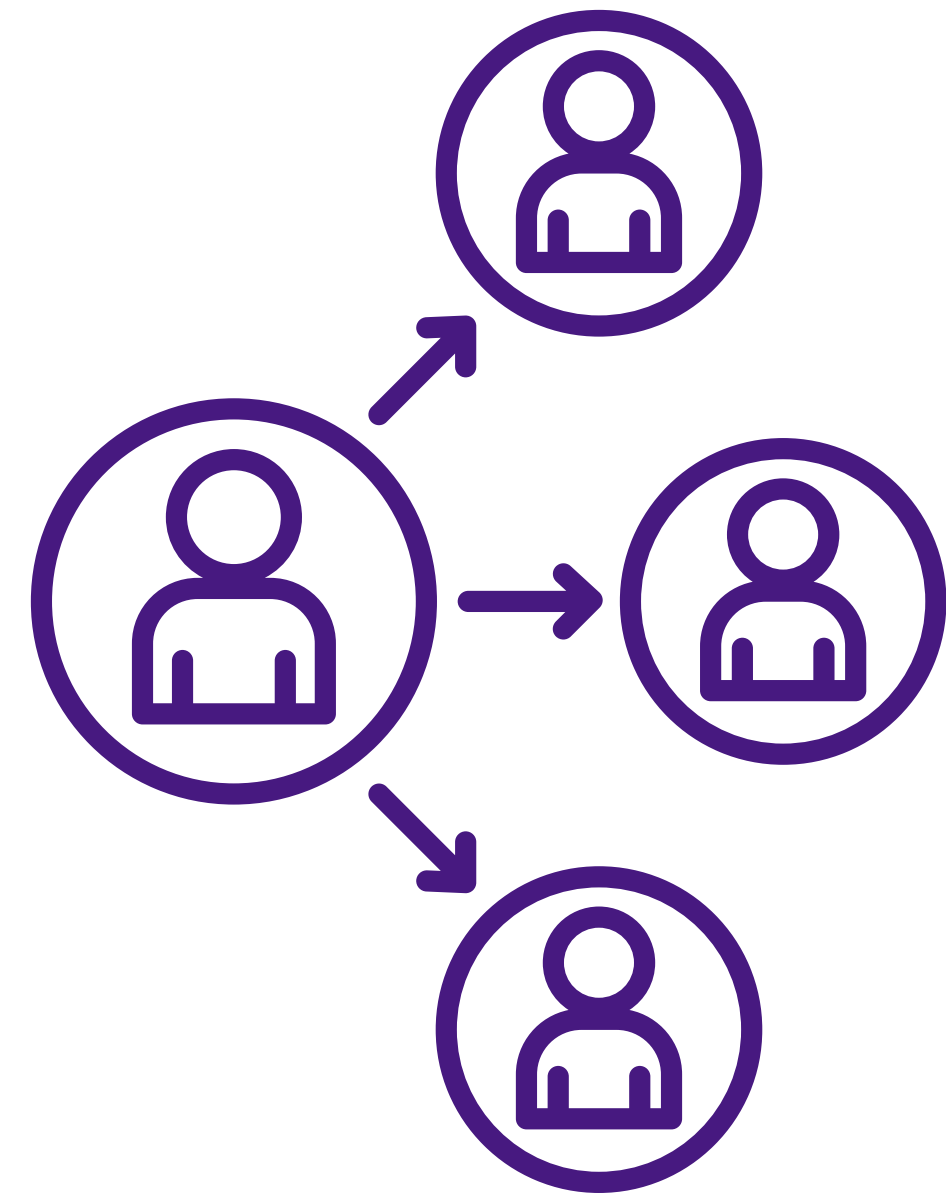
The objective of victim engagement

- Victims contact VSE because they need help, support or information
- Our main objective: **connect them quickly and efficiently to appropriate support, usually one of our member organisations**
- We are referral agents, not support workers
- Maintain appropriate boundaries



The importance of quick and efficient referrals

- Victims often repeat their story many times
- Our role:
 - Keep contact focused and brief
 - Ask only information needed for referral
 - Connect quickly to the right service
- Victim is put in direct contact with:
 - A local victim support service, or
 - Another appropriate support organisation



Giving victims choice

Victims should always be given a choice



Contact the support service themselves



[Home](#) [Our Organisation](#) [Activities](#) [Networks](#) [PR](#)

[Home](#) | [Referral System](#)

Referral System

VSE's referral on their behalf

Giving victims choice

Thank you for reaching out to Victim Support Europe (VSE). My name is Larisa and I work within the Victim Care Team. Apologies if I misunderstood something. Our working language is English. I'm sorry what you and your family going through. My deepest condolence.

Let me begin by explaining who Victim Support Europe is. Despite our name, we do not offer direct support to victims of crime as a 'support service' ourselves, rather, we lead a network of support organisations across Europe and beyond through advocacy, training and other activities.

What we can do is link you with one of our member organisations, which provides direct support to victims of crime and can assist you either by providing direct support or by providing you with assistance in reporting the situation to the national police authorities.

I am not sure where are you currently located. If you are in Portugal, I would recommend contacting our member organisation there, [APAV](#) (Associação Portuguesa de Apoio à Vítima). They are well-equipped to provide the emotional, legal, and practical support you need. If you are located in France, we would recommend to contact our members there, [France Victimes](#), that would be the most suitable to provide you with the support if you will need it.

Please don't hesitate to reach out again if you need further assistance in contacting APAV or France Victimes. We're here to guide you and your family through this process and ensure you receive the help and care you deserve.

Wishing you strength and support on this journey.

Kind regards,

Larisa

Giving victims choice

Thank you for reaching out to **Victim Support Europe** (VSE). My name is Angelica and I work within the Victim Care Team. I'm very sorry to hear about your situation and what you have been through throughout all these years.

Let me begin by explaining who Victim Support Europe is. Despite our name, we do not offer direct support to victims of crime as a 'support service' ourselves, rather, we lead a network of support organisations across Europe and beyond through advocacy, training and other activities.

What we can do is link you with one of our member organisations, which provides direct support to victims of crime and can assist you either by providing direct support or by providing you with assistance in reporting the crimes to the relevant police authorities.

In Belgium we have our members, [CAW](#). They can provide you with psycho-social help and refer you to other organizations in case you need other forms of support. In this case, we can either, and with your authorisation, forward your contact information to them, or you can reach them directly. Whatever feels more convenient for you. You can find their contact information on the website we provided in the link.

We hope this was helpful. Please let us know if we can help you further.

Kind regards,

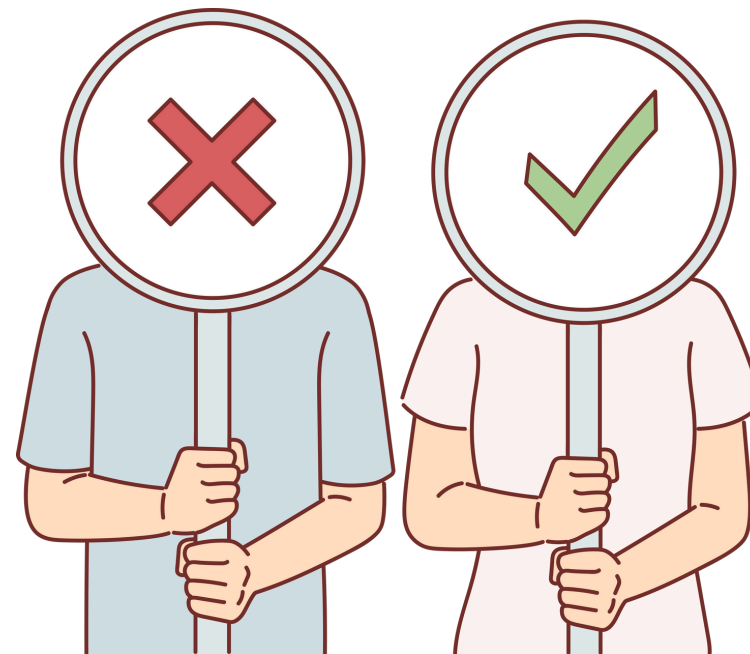
Angelica

Giving victims control



What do we need before taking any decision ?

Victim's consent



What if a victim is in (immediate) danger?

If there is immediate danger:

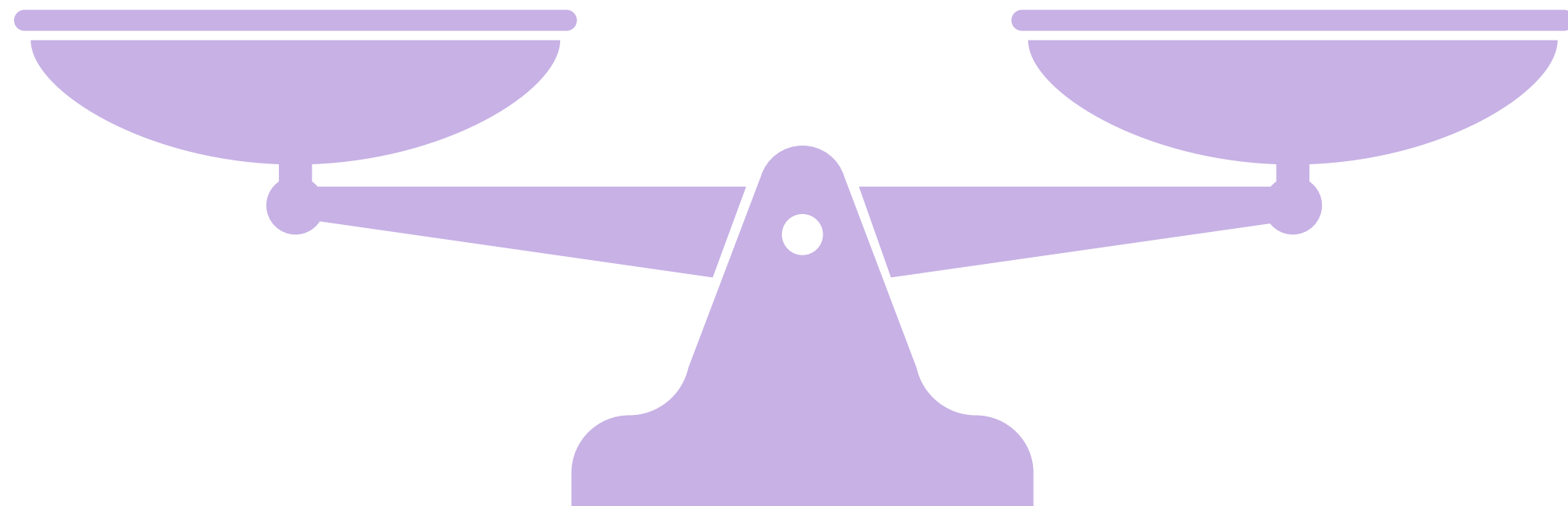
- First refer to police
- Victim support services are secondary
- Never share personal data without consent
 - Exception: life-threatening situations
→ contact Victim Care Team and Levent or Aleks



Finding the Right Balance

**Quick and efficient
referral**

**Communicate with
respect and empathy**



Communicating with respect and empathy

- A short or abrupt reply is not enough
- Replies should
 - Acknowledge the victim's needs
 - Clearly explain the referral process



Any questions ?





Avoiding Victim-Blaming in Communication



Module 2

The Burden of Victims of Crime

When a crime happens,

Victims often carry a heavy burden after a crime, not just from the trauma, but also from....

Judgement



What is Victim-Blaming?



“She was wearing a short skirt, she was alone and drunk, what did she expect?”

Types Victim-Blaming

“She was wearing a short skirt; what did she expect?”



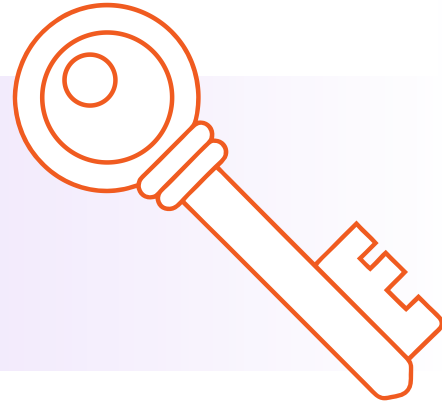
External victim-blaming

“I got robbed. It’s my fault for parking there.”



Self-blaming

Key Principle



Nobody deserves to be a victim



How Questions Can Cause Harm

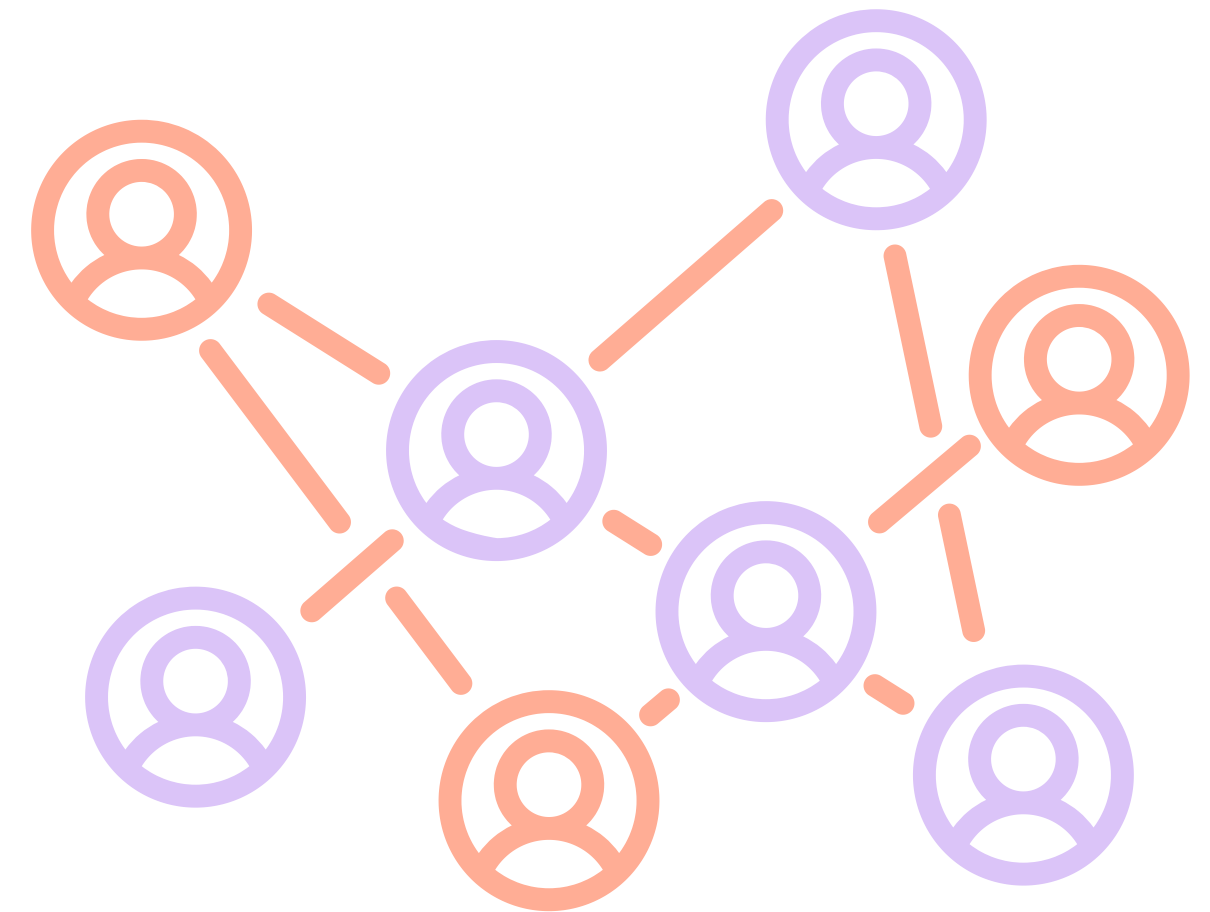


“Who were you with the night of the assault (at the party)?”

Could this question make the victim feel blamed?

Your Role as Referral Agents

- Focus on impact, not details
- You do not need full details of the crime.
- Focus on:
 - Impact of the crime: financial, physical, psychological.
 - Information necessary for an efficient referral.



Scenario

You are at a Victim Support Europe conference when a participant approaches you, visibly shaken, explaining that they have been the target of ongoing cyber harassment and did not tell anyone...until you.

What is your role?



What is not your role?



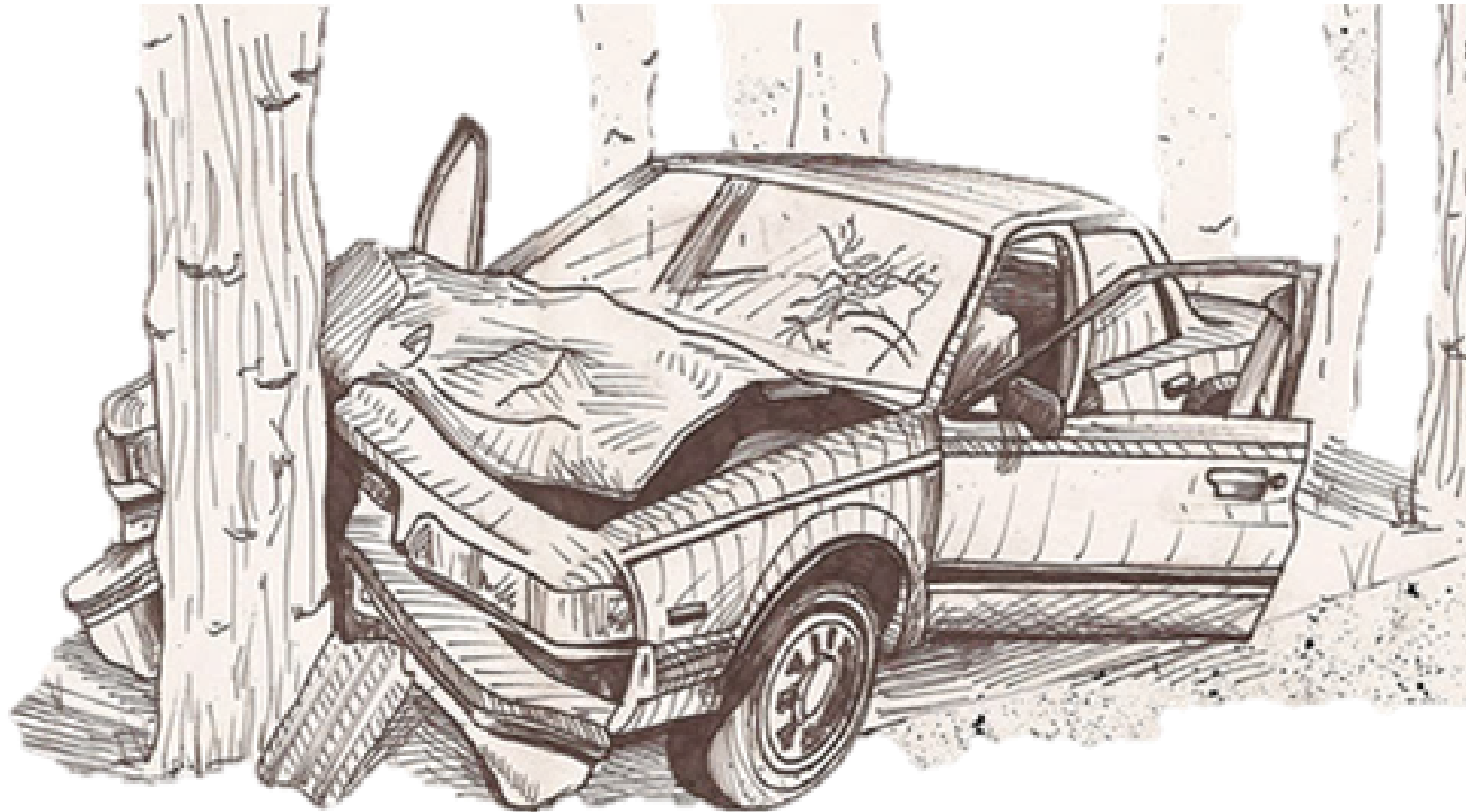
Good Questions to Answer

“Would it help if I connect you with someone who can provide guidance? Or support?”

“How has this affected your daily life?”

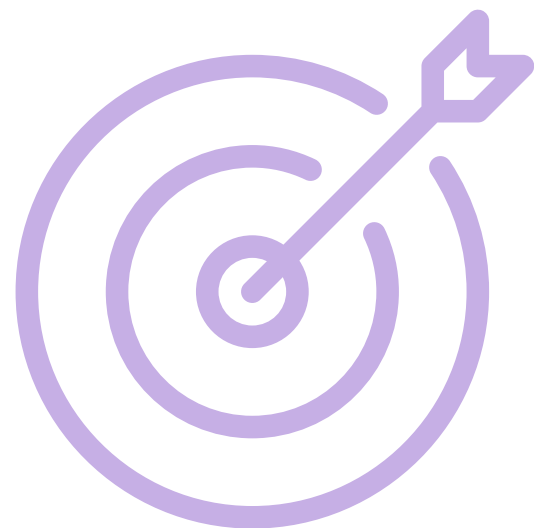


The “Car Crash” Scenario

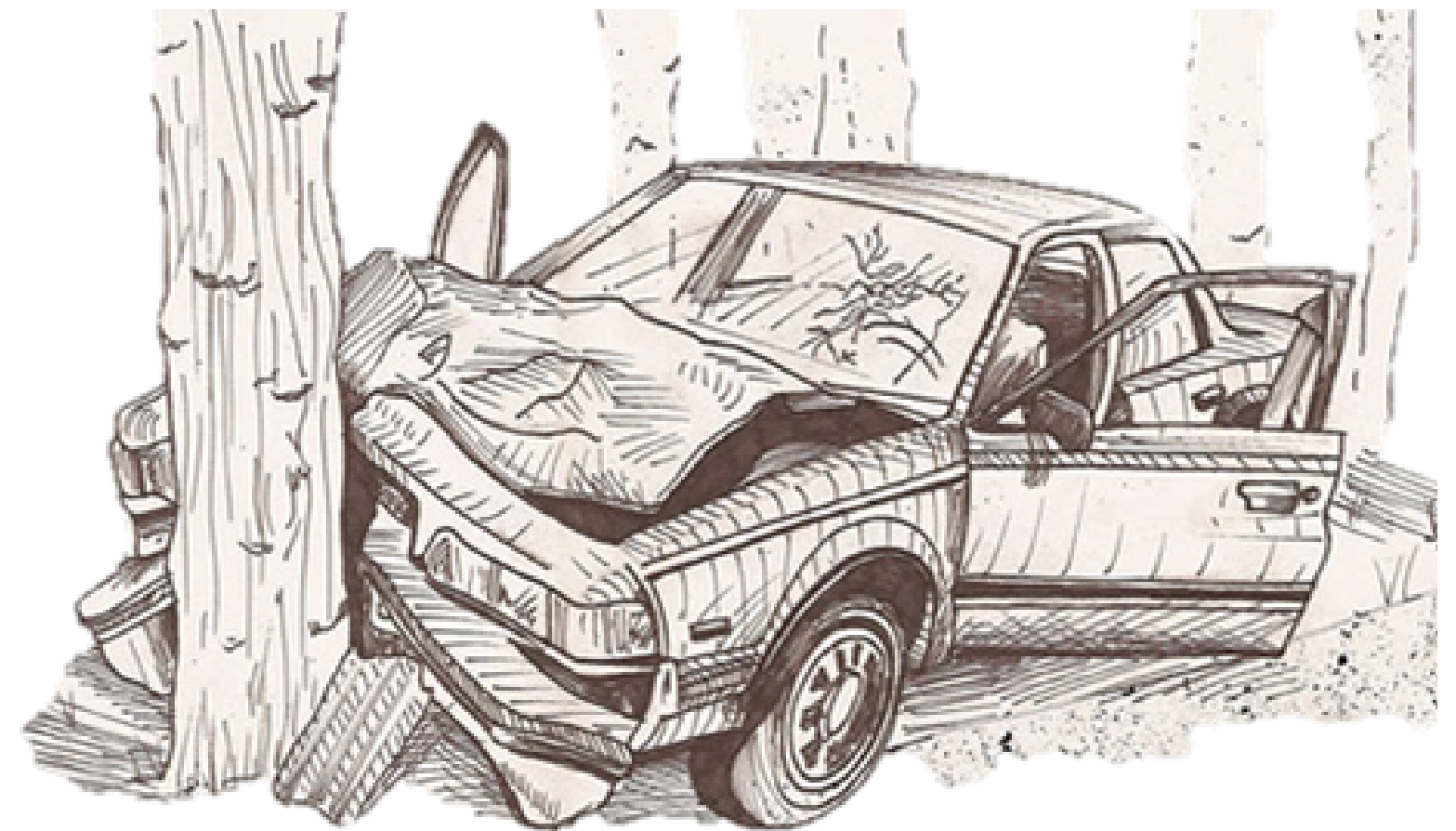


Defining the Car Crash Model

The “Car Crash” model is a tool for guiding communication with victims of crime.



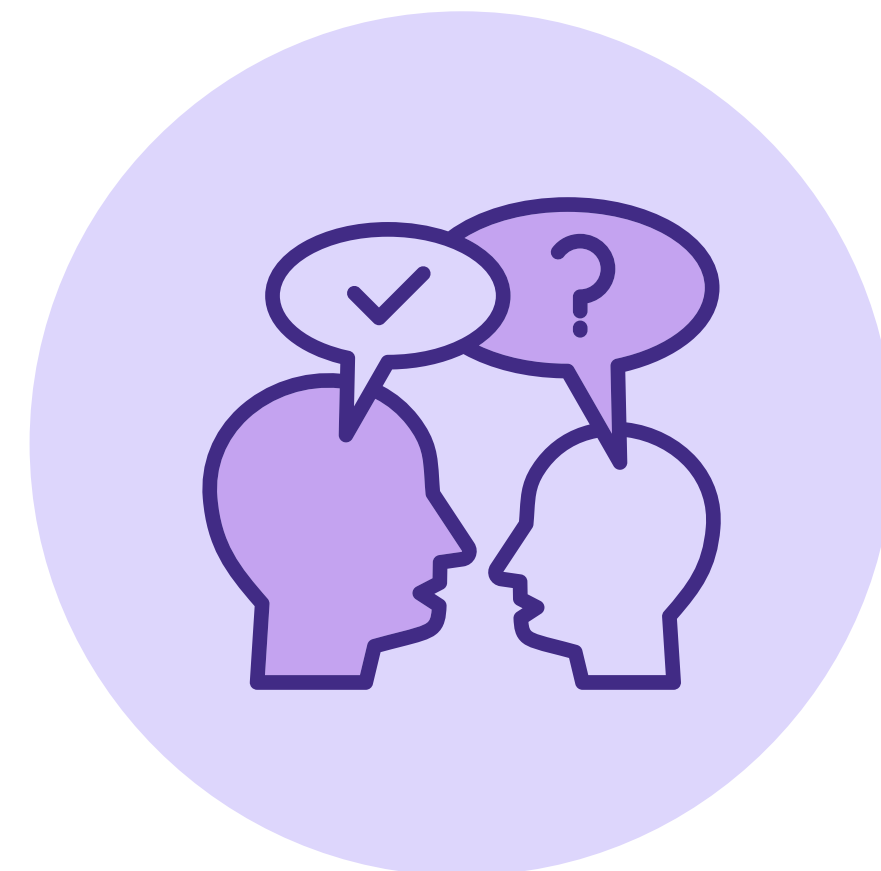
Focus on impact, not details.



Any questions ?



Key elements of effective communication

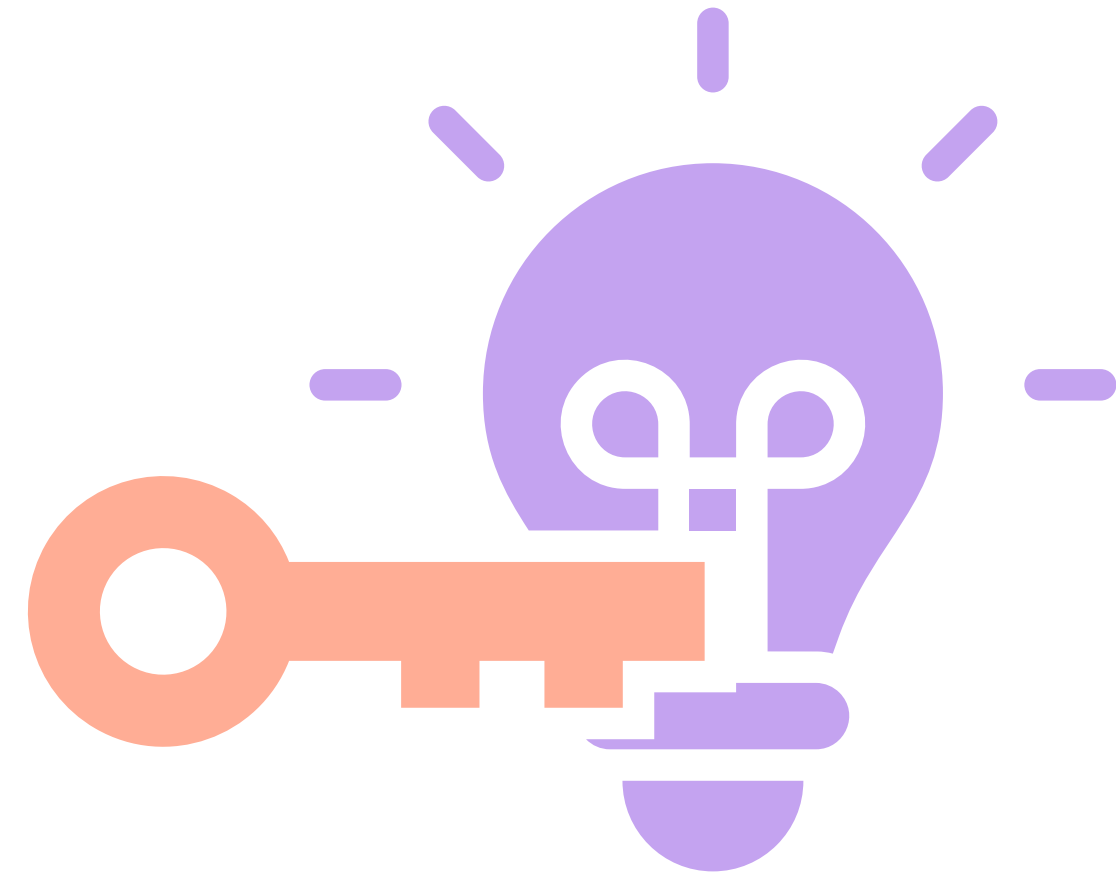


Module 3

Four key elements

1. Recognise the person as a victim
2. Use non-judgemental language
3. Stay professional
4. Your role is to connect, not to solve

○



1. Recognise the person as a victim

Victims of crime often:

- Feel their experiences are not acknowledged
- Blame themselves for what happened

Our role:

- Legitimize their experience
- Inform them of their rights

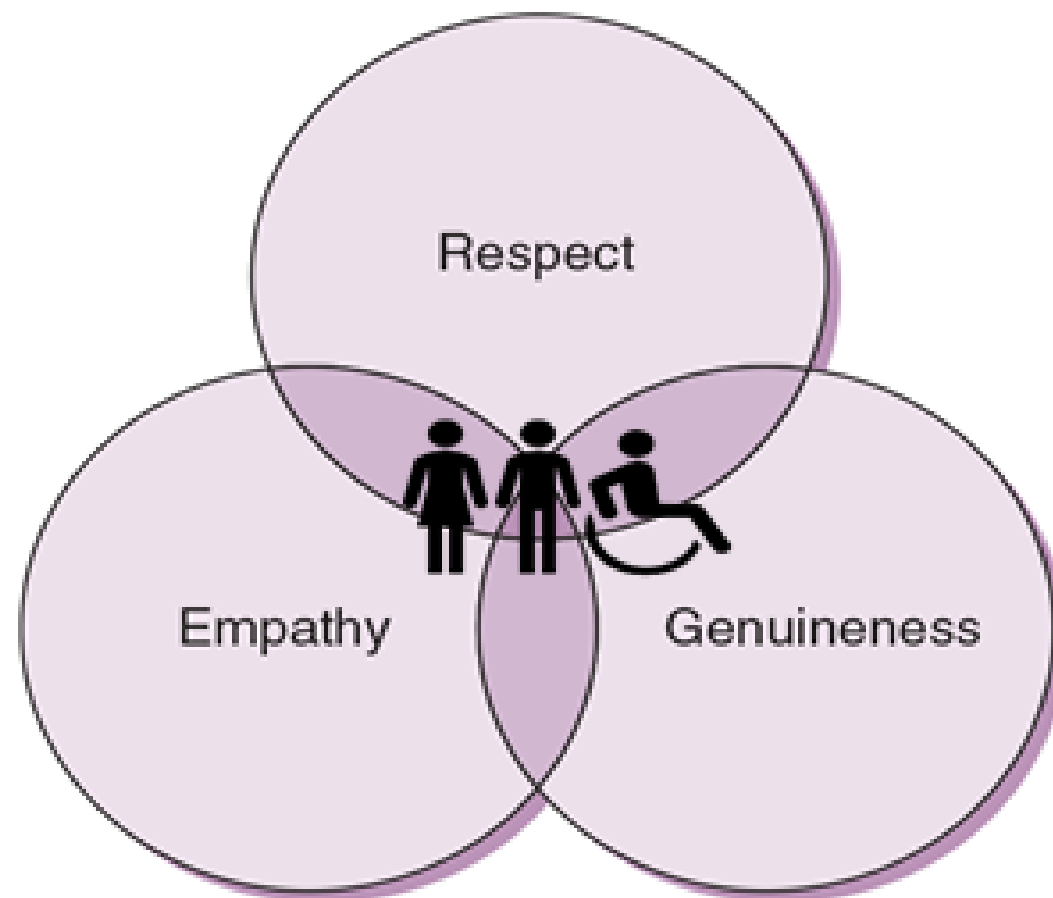


Example of validating language

“As a **victim of crime**, you have a set of **rights** established under law. A victim support organisation can explain these rights to you and inform you about how to access any legal redress you may seek. This organisation can also offer **emotional and practical** support, should you desire it. **Would you like me to refer you** to your closest victim support organisation?”

2. Use non-judgemental language

Person-Centred Therapy developed by psychologist Carl Rogers



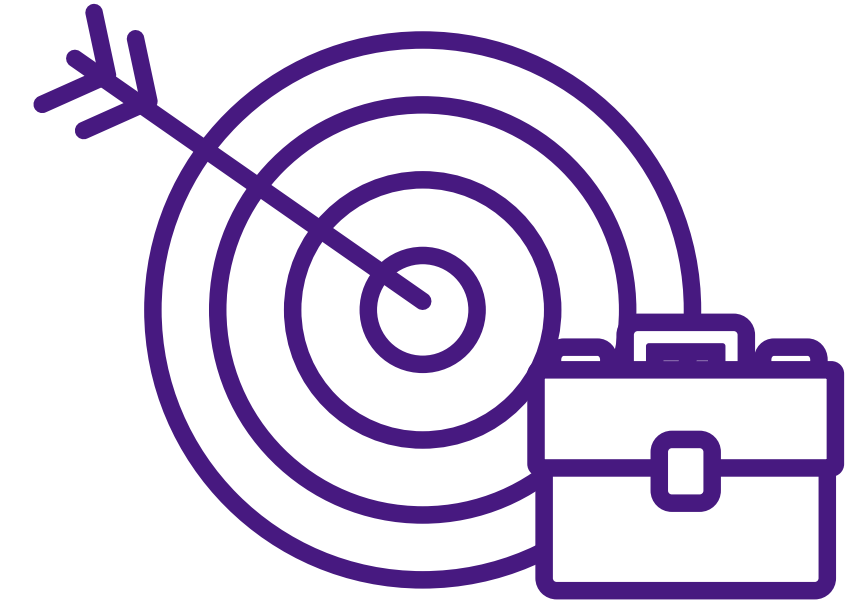
Source: Laurie M. Hack, Jan Gwyer: Evidence into Practice: Integrating Judgment, Values, and Research
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Examples of respect and empathy

- “I’m sorry you’re going through this; it must be a very difficult situation.”
- “Thank you for reaching out and trusting us with your story.”
- “I can’t imagine how hard this is for you, but I will do my best to connect you with support.”

3. Stay professional



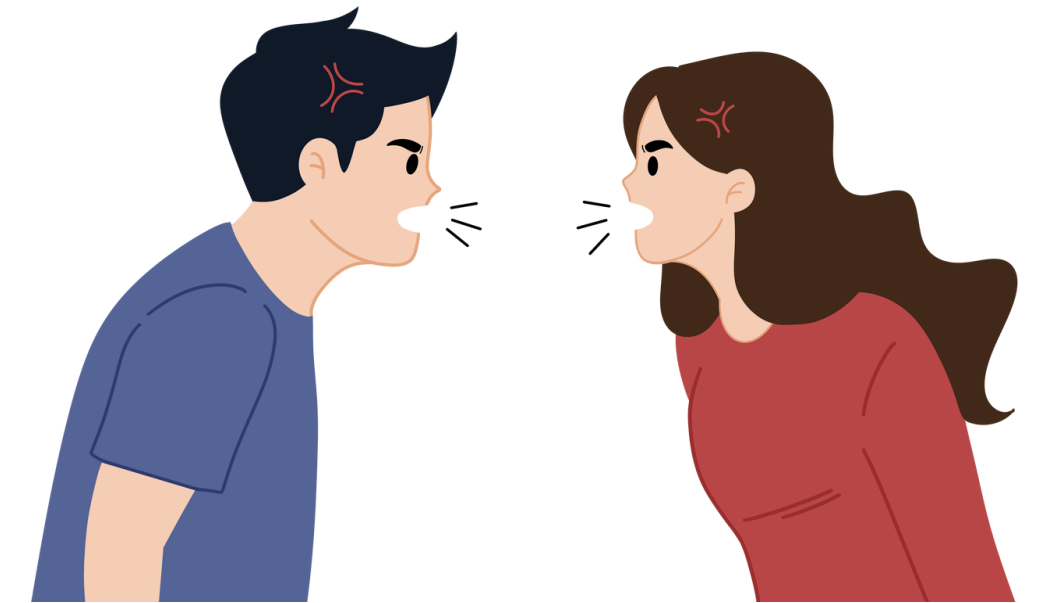
Victims may show:

- Anger
- Confusion
- Dissociation
- Aggression

Professionalism means:

- Staying calm and composed
- Explaining the limits of VSE's role
- Keeping focus on safe referral

Dealing with angry communication



1. Acknowledge and listen

Recognise the person's anger and name the feeling ("I can see you're very upset"). This helps reduce escalation because the person no longer needs to prove their emotion. Keep your tone calm and steady.

2. Express your willingness to help

Show openness and support ("I want to understand what's going on and see how I can help").

3. Listen actively

Use body language or tone to show you're listening. Reflect and summarise their concerns to demonstrate understanding. Avoid asking too many questions, as this can fuel anger.

4. Point out the behaviour

Gently describe the behaviour you observe ("You're shouting", "That language feels threatening to me"). This often helps the person realise and adjust their behaviour.

Dealing with angry communication



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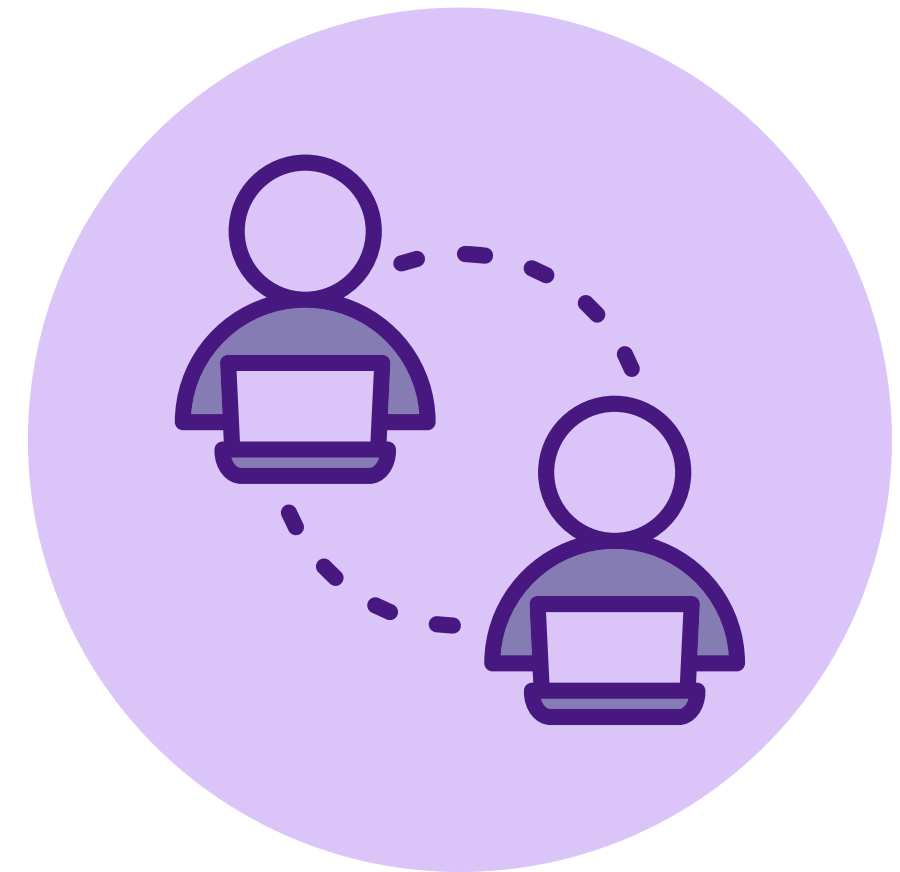
As a staff member, you are not expected to stay in a situation where you feel abused or threatened. If

at any time you feel unsafe, you should withdraw and consult your manager.

Report any incidents, threats, or any form of sexual, racial or other offensive comments, whether they are directed to you or are expressed generally.

4. Your role is to connect, not to solve

Focus on practical next steps and linking
the victim to the right support



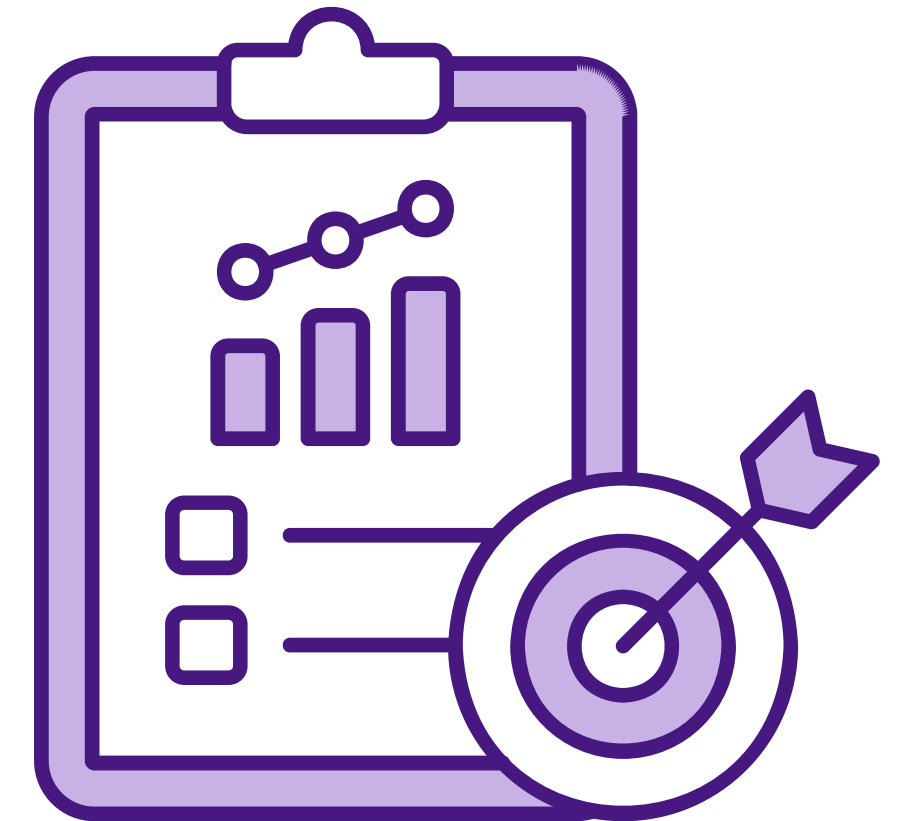
Follow-Up with Victims



- If possible follow up after concluding communication with a victim
- Verify referrals: Contact the referral organisation to confirm they have reached out to the victim
- If unsure, check in directly with the victim to ensure they are accessing support
- Timing matters: Complete follow-ups within two weeks of making the referral

Key Takeaways

- We are referral agents, not support workers or therapists
- Our core goal: quick, safe and appropriate referral
- Communicate with respect, empathy and genuineness
- Use non-judgemental, non-blaming language at all times
- Give choice and obtain informed consent for any referral
- Maintain clear professional boundaries to protect victims and staff
- When in doubt: ask for help, use templates, and consult colleagues



TIME FOR A
BREAK.

See you in 5min

Helpful things to say to victims

- What do you need?
- What can I do for you?
- I'm sorry that happened.
- What happened to you is not your fault.
- I believe you.
- Your case is important/unique.
- Are you safe?
- Do you have any concerns about your safety?
- Who else have you spoken to?
- Would you like a referral for further victim assistance?
- Do you need anything else? If you do, contact me at....
- Is now a good time to talk?
- Is there a better time to talk?
- You're not going crazy.
- I can't imagine how difficult this was or is for you.
- I am going to try my best to help you.
- I don't know, but I'll find out.
- Let's see if we can figure out your most important needs right now.
- I'm glad you called/e-mailed

Things not to say to victims

- I know how you feel.
- I understand what you're going through.
- Time heals all wounds.
- Why?
- Why didn't you?
- Why were you/didn't you?
- It could be worse.
- Your case reminds me of another victim I dealt with.
- What you need is...
- It's God's will (or any religious platitude).
- Move on, put it behind you/ get on with your life.
- You're not the only victim I'm trying to help.
- They aren't really bad people.
- I can promise you that...
- If I were in your shoes... You should have...
- You're so strong...
- At least you weren't hurt...
- Nothing at all.

To Say or Not to Say?

“Are you safe?”

✓ SAY:

Checks immediate safety needs

To Say or Not to Say?

“What can I do for you?”

✓ SAY:

Supportive and empowering

To Say or Not to Say?

“Would you like a referral for further assistance?”

✓ SAY:

Provides options without pressure

To Say or Not to Say?

“I’m sorry that happened.”

✓ SAY :

Empathetic, validating

To Say or Not to Say?

“Let’s see if we can figure out your most important needs right now.”

✓ SAY:

Collaborative and practical

To Say or Not to Say?

“I know how you feel.”

✗ DON'T SAY:

Assumes their emotional experience

To Say or Not to Say?

“It could be worse.”

✗ DON'T SAY:

Minimizes the victim's experience

To Say or Not to Say?

“Your case reminds me of another victim I helped.”

✗ DON'T SAY:
Comparison is harmful

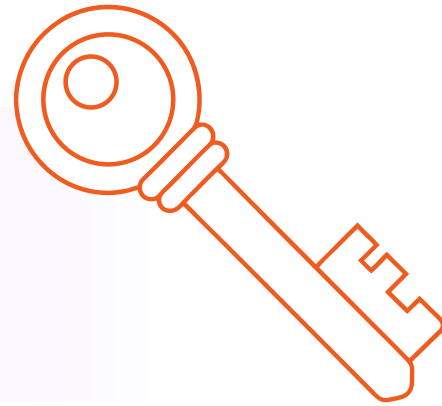
To Say or Not to Say?

“If I were you, I would have...”

✗ DON'T SAY:

Judgmental, shifts responsibility to the victim

Key Reminders



! Avoid:

- Giving advice
- Comparisons
- Generalisations
- Promises you cannot keep
- Telling victims how they feel
- Saying “You’re safe now”

✓ Use:

- Validation
- Safety checks
- Empathy
- Options and referrals
- Neutral questions
- Honest “I don’t know, but I’ll find out”



Victim Care Team

**What we do and how you
can support us!**



What We Do: Victim Care Team (VCT)

Key Areas of Work:

- **Direct Support to Victims**
 - Daily support via email & phone
 - Through our secure platform for intra-boarder or cross-border referrals
- **Referral System**
 - Victim-to-member referrals
 - Member-to-member referrals
- **Terrorism Response Network (TRN)**
 - Provides victim-centric information & long-term support
 - Works with EU Commission and governments to strengthen responses



Victims' Advocate Platform (VAP)

What the Platform Provides:

- Safe environment for victims to share insights & experiences
- Regular online & in-person meetings
- Web space for resources & connections
- Participation in global events (e.g., UN/VSE panel in Nov)

Additional VC Work:

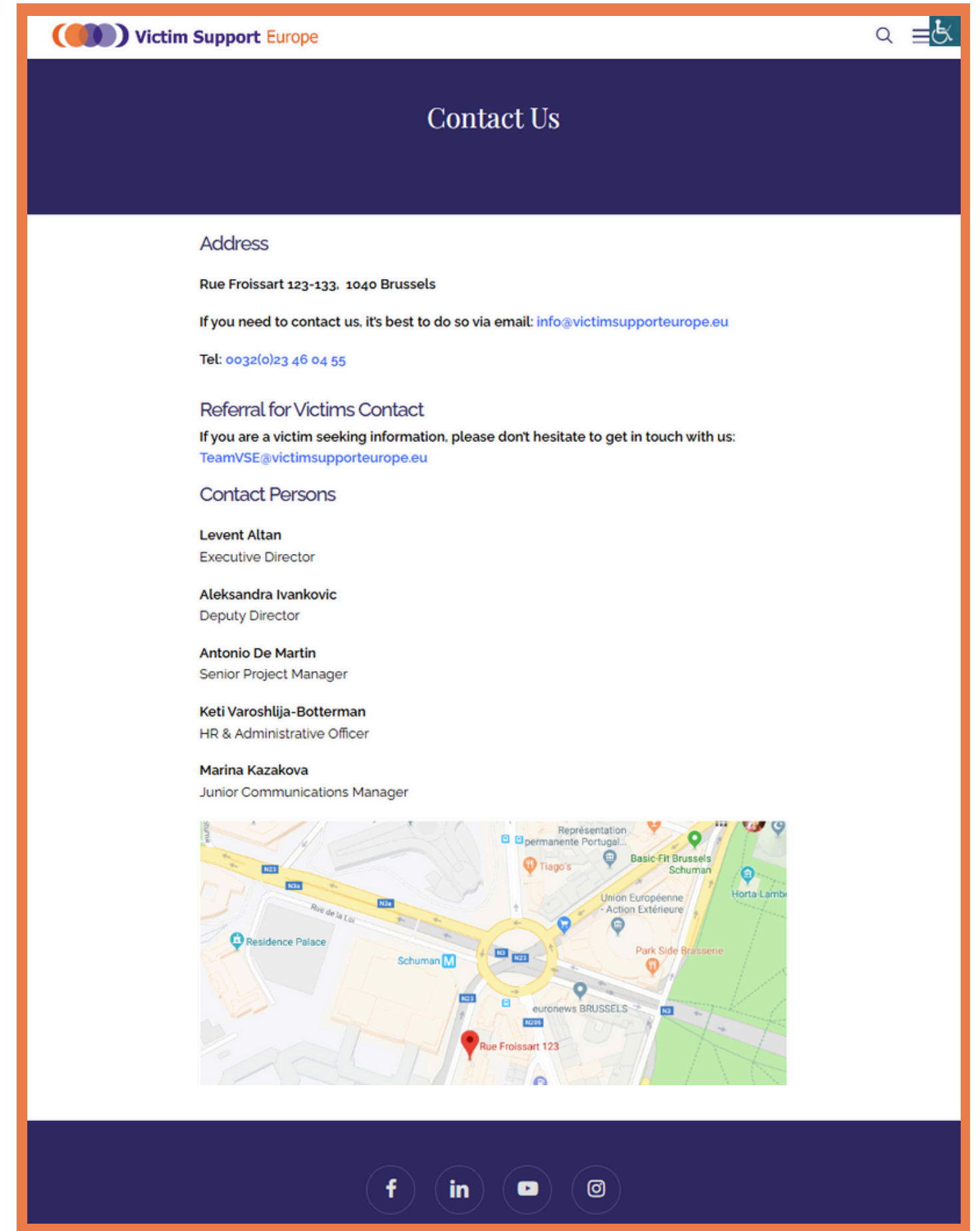
- Country Sheets – following standard methodology to develop profiles for EU and non-EU countries
- Protocols – for public speaking requests & compassionate engagement



Connecting with Victims

How victims reach us:

- Either by calling VSE Offices
 - around 15 per year
- Or by email from the "Contact Us" page
 - around 300 a year
 - only around 30 of these are actually processed through our Referral System



The screenshot shows the 'Contact Us' page of the Victim Support Europe website. The page has a dark blue header with the 'Victim Support Europe' logo and a search icon. Below the header, the page is divided into sections: 'Address', 'Referral for Victims Contact', 'Contact Persons', and a map. The 'Address' section provides the location in Brussels and contact details. The 'Referral for Victims Contact' section offers an email and phone number for reaching out. The 'Contact Persons' section lists four staff members with their roles. The map at the bottom shows the location of the offices in Brussels.

Victim Support Europe

Contact Us

Address

Rue Froissart 123-133, 1040 Brussels

If you need to contact us, it's best to do so via email: info@victimsupporteurope.eu

Tel: 0032(0)23 46 04 55

Referral for Victims Contact

If you are a victim seeking information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us:
TeamVSE@victimsupporteurope.eu

Contact Persons

Levent Altan
Executive Director

Aleksandra Ivankovic
Deputy Director

Antonio De Martin
Senior Project Manager

Keti Varoshlija-Botterman
HR & Administrative Officer

Marina Kazakova
Junior Communications Manager





How can YOU support the work of the Victim Care team?

When receiving a call from a Victim:

- Ask them what language they would like to speak in (and pass the phone to someone in the office who speaks that language).
- Allow space for victim to vent out and acknowledge their situation "we are very sorry to hear what you are going through"...
- Explain that we are a network organization and that we do NOT provide direct support to victims, rather we link victims to support services in their residing country.
- Tell them we will refer them one of our members if they can provide a clear description of the situation via email to TeamVSE@victimsupporteurope.eu OR they can go to our "contact us" page (where they found our office number) and fill in the form.
- Only with their consent, ask if they are comfortable with us recording their name and telephone number (inform them that this is only visible to VC team)



Meet the team



Levent Altan

- Executive Director
- l.altan@victimsupporteurope.eu



Angelica Vieira

- Partnership and Networking Intern
- vse.intern1@victimsupporteurope.eu



Larisa Spahić

- Junior Partnership and Networking Officer
- l.spahic@victimsupporteurope.eu



Any questions ?





THANK YOU!

VICTIM CARE TEAM

VICTIM SUPPORT EUROPE

www.victim-support.eu
info@victimsupporteurope.eu