



Hallmarks for Healing: A Handout for Survivors of Sexual Assault

Healing is unique for each survivor. A crucial element of healing is acknowledging your personal progress throughout the healing process. The following is a list of benchmarks, compiled in no particular order, which may help to reinforce the great strides in healing that you have made and are continuing to make each day:

- I identify that healing is possible, that I am not alone, and that it's never too late to ask for help.
- I recognize that the decision to heal is a powerful and positive choice.
- I am beginning to understand my feelings about the assault.
- I believe the abuse happened and that it was not my fault.
- I can talk about the assault experience with a counselor or a therapist.
- I acknowledge that breaking the silence is a very powerful step in recovery (talking to a therapist, advocate, friend, family member, partner, or speaking out publically).
- I give responsibility for the assault to the person who attacked me, and that the responsibility is not mine to accept.
- I am better able to understand my trauma and my reactions to it.
- I am better able to accept those trauma reactions rather than fight them or let them consume all my time and energy.
- I allow myself to grieve, and understand that it is a natural part of the healing process.
- I remind myself that there is no finish line to healing and that the hard days will become less frequent.
- I prioritize practicing self care (e.g. eating healthy meals and exercising regularly, practicing deep breathing or other relaxation exercises, journaling etc.).
- I sleep better at night.
- I am able to reward myself in little ways now rather than wait for others to make me feel better.
- I am able to forgive myself or blame myself less.
- I am developing a sense of my own self-value and am increasing my self-esteem.
- I recognize that I have the right to regain control and that the assailant does not have power over me.
- I am wary of unhealthy relationships and set limits or let go of contact with people who belittle my experience, make me feel bad about myself, and don't listen or support me.
- I am re-experiencing some sense of control and power in my life.
- I am more comfortable with making choices for myself.
- I can deal with changes in my life, even small changes, like appointment schedules.
- I can participate in activities that are important to me and bring me satisfaction.
- I am better able to enjoy myself and experience pleasure more frequently now.
- I prioritize healthy relationships with people who bring joy to my life, listen, care about and support me.
- I know that I am not reduced by my experience, it does not define me.
- I am surviving.