



# Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault

Self-Paced Educational Module

## DoD Safe Helpline Info Paper

Updated March 2021

## What is *Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault*?

Building Hope & Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault is a self-guided, online, educational program that seeks to help you begin to recover, heal and build resiliency after a sexual assault. Recognizing the impact that trauma can have, this program is part of a comprehensive effort to enhance resilience and improve readiness across the Total Force. The program is designed to be completed at your own pace and features definitions, helpful information about coping mechanisms, practical relaxation exercises, and links to resources and referrals for ongoing support. Also included is a brief, optional self-assessment for you to gauge how effective your current coping strategies are, and whether you may benefit from additional support and resources. The program can be completed anonymously, or Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) and Victim Advocates looking for additional information on this topic can complete the course for one hour of D-SAACP credit.

## Background

Research shows that some Service members, including cadets and midshipmen, have experienced child sexual abuse and sexual assault prior to joining the military.<sup>1</sup> According to the DoD Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, approximately 10% (587 reports) of total reports involved incidents that occurred prior to military service.<sup>2</sup> In order to support these individuals, the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), via a contract with RAINN (the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), developed and deployed this anonymous, self-guided educational program.

Building Hope & Resiliency leverages RAINN's 26 years of experience in providing direct services to survivors and incorporates current research on resilience and strengths-based perspectives to support those using the program as they work to restore resiliency and hope.

## Goals of the Program

The instructional goals of Building Hope & Resiliency include:

- Validate the struggle and adversity that individuals who have experienced sexual assault face.
- Empower users in their healing journey.
- Build knowledge of exercises that can enhance a user's ability to cope with the short- and long-term effects of sexual assault.
- Increase awareness and understanding of, and access to, available mental healthcare resources.
- Inspire hope for continuing personal growth.

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<sup>1</sup>Blosnich, J. R., Dichter, M. E., Cerulli, C., Batten, S. V., & Bossarte, R. M. (2014). Disparities in adverse childhood experiences among individuals with a history of military service. *JAMA psychiatry*, 71(9), 1041-1048.

<sup>2</sup>Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office. (2018). Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2017 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military. Retrieved from [http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY17\\_Annual/DoD\\_FY17\\_Annual\\_Report\\_on\\_Sexual\\_Assault\\_in\\_the\\_Military.pdf](http://sapr.mil/public/docs/reports/FY17_Annual/DoD_FY17_Annual_Report_on_Sexual_Assault_in_the_Military.pdf)

## What Can I Expect When Participating in the Program?

The program consists of five self-paced modules. You can decide when you want to access the program and how long you wish to spend on each module. The entire course will take approximately one hour to complete.

### **Module 1** - What Does Sexual Assault Look Like? (est. completion time 10-15 minutes)

Some individuals who have experienced sexual assault may have difficulty labeling what happened to them. This module provides examples and information of what sexual assault may look like to help you find language to describe your own story. Also included are links to more information on how the Department of Defense and other states define sexual assault.

### **Module 2** - What Are the Effects of Sexual Assault? (est. completion time 15 minutes)

This module provides information that describes the body's response to trauma and explains different symptoms that you may experience. This information is intended to normalize and validate your experience, in order to help you develop a greater understanding of your personal triggers and to deepen your self-awareness as you begin the healing process.

### **Module 3** - How Can I Heal? (est. completion time 10 minutes)

Trauma can affect individuals in profound ways and everyone has a different path to healing. This module introduces realistic and practical coping mechanisms to help you gain control of your recovery and equips you with tools to examine your personal boundaries within your own interpersonal interactions. You also have the option to take a brief assessment to determine the effectiveness of your current coping strategies and whether you might benefit from additional support and resources.

### **Module 4** - Relaxation Exercises (est. completion time 15 minutes)

This module provides three relaxation exercises you can use if you feel triggered or overwhelmed in the moment. These exercises are just a few of many that are available. You can explore these and use them to help determine what works best for you.

### **Module 5** - Resources and References (est. completion time 5 minutes)

This module provides you with both military and non-military related resources if you want to explore on-going support. This section also includes program content references if you found certain sections particularly helpful and want to learn more. The information provided is meant to help empower you to make the best choices for you and your recovery.



## How Can a User Access the Online Program?

Users can access all Safe Helpline Self-Paced Educational Programs anonymously at [SafeHelpline.org/education](https://SafeHelpline.org/education) or via the [Safe Helpline app](#). To take this course for one hour of D-SAACP continuing education credit, please visit [Safe Helpline's Education Portal](#).

## What is DoD Safe Helpline?

The Department of Defense (DoD) [Safe Helpline](#) is the Department's sole secure, confidential, and anonymous crisis support service specially designed for members of the DoD community affected by sexual assault. Safe Helpline is available 24/7, worldwide. The DoD Safe Helpline staff provides live, one-on-one support to survivors, their families, and other DoD stakeholders. It is operated by [RAINN](#) (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), a national anti-sexual violence organization, through a contract with the [Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office](#) (DoD SAPRO).