



Managing the emotional impact of GBV within a University Context

If you have been affected by gender-based violence, there are various options available to you. Any action taken is your decision and non-judgemental support is available.

More information on your reporting options can be found in the '[Gender Based Violence Reporting Options](#)' handout.

If you have been affected by GBV, whether you wish to make a formal complaint to the University, please speak with the Equally Safe Team for assistance creating a personalised safety & wellbeing plan.

Emotional Safety

Sometimes when we experience something distressing or traumatic, we can be left with unwanted memories and challenging emotions. This can be difficult to manage whilst trying to remain focussed on studies, work, and everyday life.

If you are in this situation, the University can provide practical support such as extensions and special circumstances; and emotional support through services such as [Equally Safe](#), [Student Counselling Service](#), [Student Wellbeing Service](#) or [Chaplaincy](#). You can also contact your GP.

If you prefer self-directed support in managing the impact of your experiences, you can try some of the tips included in the guidance over the page, or access further support and reporting information at edin.ac/GBV-support.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Emergency services:

Call **999** for the Police or Ambulance service if you feel at risk of immediate harm or danger.

Call **101** for Police in non-emergency

University Security: 0131 650 2257

Crisis support:

NHS 24 – 111 for critical mental and physical health support outside of GP opening hours

Edinburgh Crisis Centre – 0800 8010 414 for support if experiencing a mental health crisis

Breathing Space – 0800 838 587 if you're feeling low, anxious, or depressed

The Samaritans – 116 126 to talk about anything that's worrying you

Specialist GBV support:

The Equally Safe Team – email equallysafeteam@ed.ac.uk to access the University's gender-based violence support team

SARCS – 0800 148 8888 within 7 days of an assault to access a forensic medical examination and sexual violence support

Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre – 0131 556 9437 for sexual violence support

Abused Men in Scotland – 03300 949 395 (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm) for male domestic abuse support

Edinburgh Women's Aid – 0131 315 8110 for female domestic abuse support

For a comprehensive list of local and national GBV support services, please visit: edin.ac/GBV-support

Traumatic experiences can impact people in many ways. Sometimes, it can lead to entering a state of hyper-vigilance where we feel on edge and alert to danger; or it can lead to feeling helpless, withdrawn, or unmotivated.

It's important to be kind and patient with yourself as you navigate through this. Below are some things you can try, to ease symptoms in different University environments.

Grounding

Grounding is a practice that can help you to refocus on the present, and create space from difficult thoughts and feelings. Below is a list of physical and mental grounding techniques that you can try to redirect your thoughts when experiencing a flashback or difficult thoughts.

Touch a physical grounding item – focus on how this feels in your hand. Is it heavy? Cold? Soft? What colour is it?

Keeping a small grounding item with you can support you at times of emotional difficulty when you're in public places such as a class or a nightclub environment. This can be a piece of jewellery you always wear, or a small stone you keep in your pocket.

54321 method – Use your senses to notice your current environment

Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.

Alphabet categories – Choose a broad category, such as 'animals' or 'football teams' and mentally name something within the category for each letter of the alphabet.

More information and examples of grounding techniques can be found at: www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques

Flashbacks and Triggers

Flashbacks are memories of an intrusive nature that can be visual, auditory, or sensory (body memories). They can be triggered by a smell, a physical space, or someone who looks like the person who caused you harm; they can feel like you are reliving the experience. This is your brain processing and making sense of the traumatic memories, but it can feel unsettling or frightening.

If this happens when you are in a safe space, you can use [breathing techniques](#) to enable you to sit with the flashback. If this feels too much, you can try to distance yourself from the flashback by grounding yourself in the here and now, and reminding yourself that you have survived this experience and are safe at present.

More information on flashbacks in relation to GBV can be found at: www.rapecrisisScotland.org.uk/resources/flashbacks.pdf

Emotional Safety Planning

If the person who caused you harm is in your classes, peer group, or lives in your accommodation, you can contact the Equally Safe Team, Residence Life or your Student Advisor to explore safety planning in each of these contexts. You can read our '[Safety planning within a University Context](#)' handout for further information.

The University are unable to take formal action against an accused student without an investigation first taking place by the Student Conduct Team. For more information on this process and precautionary suspension, please visit: [Requesting an investigation | The University of Edinburgh](#) and read our handout on '[Reporting Options](#)'.

However, you can receive indirect support such as moving labs, changing rooms within student halls, and accessing separate study spaces if you speak with the EST or your school regarding your circumstances.

Gender-based violence and general wellbeing tips

Additional gender-based violence and general wellbeing information can be accessed here:

www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/

www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/wellbeing-services/self-help

reportandsupport.ed.ac.uk/

www.ercc.scot/information/little-green-book/

www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing

www.consentcollective.com/edinburgh