

## Top tips for when giving evidence — advice from a survivor

This information is from a range of self-help sheets written by survivors for survivors. The words were carefully chosen to let you and other survivors know that you're not alone, and it is possible to have a hopeful, confident future.

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Standing in the witness box in a Crown Court was the most surreal moment of my life. I spent the 6 months from the setting of the trial imagining what that moment would feel like. Over those months I had been given support and advice from my detective and ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advocate) which was crucial to getting me through my court appearance. The following is a combination of theirs and my advice that I hope is useful for when giving evidence...

- Tell the truth.... sounds obvious to say but nerves can make us doubt ourselves. But you know the truth and that is all you need to say.
- Listen carefully to the questions.... If you have not heard and / or understood it is ok to ask for it to be repeated or explained.
- Remember, you are not on trial, the defendant is ... it may feel this way or that the defence are trying to trip you up but remember it is simply the process of law and the legal process.
- Look at the jury panel when answering... it feels slightly odd to do this when it is the prosecution or defence asking the question but it is good to do and will help the jury see you as an individual, so pick a friendly face and direct your answers to them.
- Take a few deep breaths... when you enter the witness box, and give yourself a moment to centre yourself.
- Don't think too much about how you come across... don't worry if you cry, feel anger, trip over your words. The best advice out of all I was given was just be yourself, just be you. If you try to be something you think you should be it could come across as insincere.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a break... giving evidence can be stressful and emotional, so if you need a moment to compose yourself then that won't be held against you.
- Remember this is your moment... this is your chance to be heard! Giving evidence can be extremely stressful but can be equally incredibly empowering and liberating.

RSVP services: 0121 643 0301 Helpline: 0121 643 4136 Email: [info@rsvporg.co.uk](mailto:info@rsvporg.co.uk)

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- Utilise the 'special measures' offered to you... if you have any anxiety about seeing your abuser in the court then the screens in particular will really help you feel safer. Ask your ISVA about other special measures which may be open to you.
- Wear comfortable clothes... so you don't have anything that may distract you e.g. uncomfortable shoes. Some people wear a simple shirt and trousers so they can feel smart yet comfortable.
- My detective told me a few days before giving evidence that it might not be as bad as I was imagining. I thought she was crazy, however, she was right... the imagining of it was far worse. It was scary and stressful but I found it also liberating to finally be heard in a court of law – it felt like justice.

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**You don't need to deal with the effects of sexual violence, sexual assault or sexual abuse alone. RSVP are here to offer support to survivors, to enable you to live a life with hope and confidence which is free from abuse.**

### We offer:

- Specialist counselling for survivors and their supporters
- Independent sexual violence advocacy (ISVAs) to assist and inform you if you choose to report the rape or if you need support through crisis
- Social groups and coffee mornings focussing on self-help
- Emotional support on the telephone helpline 0121 643 4136

These are some of our services. For more ways we can support you contact:-

☎ 0121 643 0301

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