

# *Role Play Scenario:*

## **Athlete to Athletic Staff**

So, what do you say if someone tells you they have experienced harm? Survivors may disclose at any time. Survivors disclose and don't disclose for various wishes and reasons, all of which are entirely valid. Sometimes right after the incident, months, years, or decades after. It's never too late to share what happened, tell your story, and get support. There is never a right or wrong, or good or bad judgment, to disclosure; everyone has their process and situation and tends to disclose if/when they feel safe and ready. Remember to support if it's an adult, and follow mandated reporting requirements and laws for minors and organization policies and procedures for all participants.

Navigating these conversations can sometimes be challenging or catch you by surprise. But how you respond matters! These conversations are VERY important. This interaction is hugely impactful for the victim/survivor in terms of their help-seeking experience and mitigating potential experiences of trauma. Responders have a tremendous opportunity to make a positive difference by responding compassionately.

Role-playing, visualizing, and rehearsing these conversations and exposure to hearing them can help to build your vocabulary, comfortability, and preparedness for these critical conversations. Just like you practice for a presentation or may prepare for a significant conversation with your partner, parents, or kids, this is one of the topics that you want to have an idea of what you will say.

Of course, each situation will be unique, and you must rely on being a good listener, reading the moment, and reading the room. However, having some experience ahead of time can create more ease in the moment.

Below is an example role play you can read through or practice with someone. For these role plays, we are not focused on or thinking about precisely what is being disclosed or the potential reporting steps and processes that may occur after the disclosure; instead, we are drawing attention to the interpersonal conversation and what you say to the person in the moment.





## Role Play Scenario: Athlete to Athletic Staff

Rosie is a 13-year-old female who attends soccer programming during the summer. A male volunteer, Ryan, has been grooming Rosie. She has been subject to psychological abuse and escalating sexual abuse. Jane, the medical trainer, sees the soccer youth group every morning and afternoon. Jane has noticed behavioral changes with Rosie throughout the past couple of months. Rosie has been staying with a female peer's family this summer as her family is out of town. It is the last week of programming before the final weekend event.

**Rosie** (soft voice): Jane, I am not feeling well. Can I talk to you?

**Jane** (ushers Rosie to have a seat on the bleachers out of earshot from her peers but not in a conspicuous location): Of course, Rosie. What doesn't feel well?

**Rosie** (looking across the field to where Ryan is distracted, setting up the next activity, appears tight and stiff in her body): My stomach hurts, and I just really don't think I can do the afternoon exercise with Ryan.

**Jane** (compassionately and softly): Tell me more about what you are feeling.

**Rosie** (vigilantly looking around and tears welling up in her eyes): I just can't be around him anymore. I don't want to get in trouble or him to get in trouble. I am so confused. But something isn't right.

**Jane**: I hear you. You are doing the right thing talking to me about this. I will help you figure this out. (Gives space for silence)

**Rosie**: It's just really scary, and I do not know what to do.

**Jane**: I can help you figure it out. Want to tell me more about what's been going on?

**Rosie**: He just keeps touching me weirdly and pulling me aside a lot. Then he also keeps DMing me with weird comments at night after practice with stuff that I think my boyfriend should be saying to me, not him. And I just thought he's not supposed to do that. I mean, I like Ryan, I am just confused.





**Jane:** What you are feeling is right, Rosie. This shouldn't be happening.

**Rosie:** Then I've just been feeling really anxious and not wanting to come to soccer. He gave me these special laces for my cleats, saying I am his favorite player, and told me if I wore them, I could start the big match this weekend. I'm scared if I don't wear them, he will be mad and not let me play. But I don't like him like that, and I haven't had other coaches make me feel like this.

**Jane:** This is not your fault, and I'm so sorry you have been made to feel this way. It's not okay.

**Rosie:** Jane, you can't make a scene. I don't want him to get mad at me or get in trouble, and I want to play on Saturday.

**Jane:** I hear you, Rosie. You are not alone, and I am here to help. It took a lot of courage for you to tell me about this, and I'm so glad you did.

**Rosie:** You can't tell him I said any of this.

**Jane:** I hear you, Rosie, and we actually have some good systems in place to keep you safe. Can you hang tight? I am going to take some steps to take care of this quietly, okay? You did the right thing, and I've got your back.

**Rosie:** Okay, thanks, Jane. I will hang out here till you get back. (They are a short distance from other peers on the sideline eating their lunches.)

**Jane:** (goes to make a report and get help).



### Debrief:

Jane used affirming language throughout her conversation with Rosie. Jane validated Rosie and provided perspective and support. Additionally, Jane was keen to respect boundaries, not touching Rosie, hugging her, etc. This is because unwanted physical touch can feel like a violation, even what is intended as a comforting hand on the shoulder. Thus, staying neutral, asking permission, or letting the survivor initiate the action is always the best practice.

Jane also did not make any false promises or ask invasive questions. Instead, Jane created a safe, warm space for Rosie to share her needs and voice her concerns. Then Jane ensured Rosie was out of harm's way and would stay in a safe place away from Ryan while Jane carried out the next steps.

### Takeaways:

#WeRideTogether encourages you to revisit this role play frequently to keep best practices top of mind for these conversations. Remember, focus on proactive prevention when it comes to safeguarding. This looks like ensuring your organization has a code of conduct outlining agreed-upon behavioral expectations to hold everyone accountable to best practices for healthy relationship dynamics to create safe sporting environments. Additionally, keeping your community up to date on your organization's safeguarding policies and procedures helps provide support for when incidents occur.

*If you or someone you know may be experiencing abuse or misconduct check out our crisis resources page. For more information on next steps and responding to abuse disclosures visit our Response and Reporting Guide.*

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