

Watch for these signs of trauma in victims:

- Symptoms such as nausea, flashbacks, trembling, memory gaps, fear, and anger. These symptoms can trigger behaviours such as not cooperating, appearing adversarial, or behaving in an aggressive manner.
- Acting in a hypervigilant state or in a constant state of arousal. Victims may become hostile, particularly when they are feeling threatened.
- Disengaging, or “tuning out”. Traumatized individuals may feel numb and show no outward signs of distress.

Address a victim's sense of safety and security;

- validate and address safety concerns
- allow victims to share their feelings
- use active listening skills
- ask *what has happened to you?* rather than *what is wrong with you?*
- explain the investigation process and next steps.



Strangulation

What to know about strangulation:



- Attempted strangulation happens in 68% of women exposed to IPV
- Brain Injury can occur in seconds with no visible evidence left behind.
- Cognitive impacts: memory loss, confusion, restlessness, agitation
- Behavioural impacts: slurred speech, balance issues, dizziness, emotional lability
- Frequently overlooked as no visible signs and survivors are not aware of the risk of brain injury. Can be fatal days or weeks after incident even with no visible sign of injury.

What you can do:

ASK! Have you been choked or strangled? Ask specifically if a victim of assault has been hit in the head, face or neck. Are/did you having difficulty breathing? Difficulty swallowing?

Recognize the signs: neck/throat pain, cough, ringing in the ear, difficulty breathing or swallowing, nausea or vomiting, bruising or swelling inside the lips, bloodshot eyes, tiny red spots on the face and neck or under the eyelids and around the eyes (petechiae), scratch marks or bruising on the jaw line and/or around the neck.

- Have them seek immediate medical attention at the Emergency Department. If reluctant to seek medical attention provide explanation on the serious underlying health risks that can occur even without visible injury.
- Make referral to Victim Services.
- Conduct trauma sensitive interviews in quiet, safe space with minimal distractions and with a support person on-hand.