

If someone tells you

TREASURED VESSELS GIRLS' CENTRE · JINJA

- 1 “I believe you.”
- 2 “This is not your fault.”
- 3 “Are you safe right now?”
- 4 “Here is who I would have to tell.”
- 5 “What would you like to happen next?”

Never: why did you not leave · what did you do · you must forgive · I will tell everyone · let me confront him

116 Child Helpline, free, 24 hours · nearest police CFPU · district probation officer. Ask before you contact anyone.

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Say this, not that

Most of the damage is done by sentences offered kindly

Treasured Vessels Girls' Centre

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NOT THIS

“Why did you not leave?”

Sounds like: this is a decision she keeps making badly.

“What did you do?”

Sounds like: there is an explanation for this, and it is her.

“You must forgive him.”

Sounds like: the person she just told has already chosen a side.

“I will tell everyone who can help.”

Sounds like: she has just lost control of her own situation.

“Let me confront him.”

Sounds like: you are about to make tonight worse.

“Are you sure that is what happened?”

THIS

“Are you safe right now?”

The only urgent question.

“This is not your fault.”

Out loud, in those words.

“Whatever you decide, I am not going anywhere.”

Forgiveness is hers, on her timing.

“Nothing happens unless you want it to.”

Then ask who she is comfortable with.

“I will help you get to someone whose job this is.”

You will be elsewhere that evening. She will not.

“I believe you.”

CONFIDENTIALITY, AND CONSENT

For an adult, what she tells you is hers. Not her family, not her employer, not her church, not your colleagues. She decides who else is told.

Where a child is at risk, that changes. Say so before she tells you more: *“If this involves a child being hurt, I will have to involve someone who can protect them. I will tell you who, and I will tell you before I do it.”*

Before any referral, ask. Not “I am going to call them” but “would you like me to call them, or would you rather do it yourself?” Tell her exactly what you would say. A no is a complete answer. Ask how she can safely be contacted, since a phone may be shared or monitored.

THIS IS NOT COUNSELLING

Supportive listening is not counselling, not an investigation and not legal advice. You are not treating anything, testing her account or advising on a case. Counselling comes from trained counsellors, investigation from the police and statutory child protection, and legal advice from a legal aid provider. Your job is the first few minutes, and not making it worse.