Prank Callers, Frequent Callers & Challenging Callers

Prank Callers:

It is likely that we will all receive a prank call at some point during our work on the hotline – a call from someone who uses the hotline specifically to involve a “live voice” in a (usually sexual) fantasy or someone who calls the hotline as a game.

It can be frustrating, even infuriating to be used by a crank caller. But, remember, it’s not the end of the world, and it’s always better to err on the side in favor of the caller if you’re not sure, and to assume that they are legitimate. It is completely acceptable to end the call when it is clear that it is a prank call. “This is a busy hotline, and we need to keep the line clear for callers in crisis” “This call is not appropriate for this hotline” “I’m ending this conversation, as it is clear to me that this is inappropriate”.

Frequent Callers:

Try to limit the conversation to under ½ hour if possible. Remembering, that every time you spend an hour or more on the hotline with frequent callers, it increases the chance that they will become dependent and can end up doing more harm than good. Refocus the caller back to the issue of sexual violence if they stray too far off topic. Remind the caller that someone can follow-up with them at a scheduled time during the day, and can discuss a plan that will be best for the individual. If a caller is asking for a specific advocate, remind them that you are the one that is responding to calls during this shift, and would be happy to discuss what’s going on for them as it relates to sexual violence.

Challenging Callers:

Sometimes there are very challenging callers that it seems like there is nothing that is helpful to them, or there are a number of other issues that make communicating challenging. Some helpful things to say, to redirect/respond are:

* “These issues are beyond my scope of training. You need to be talking to your therapist about this”
* “If you are going to continue talking about that, I’m going to have to end this call”
* “I need you to slow down”
* “If you don’t slow down, I’m not going to be able to be helpful”
* “Let’s see if we can figure out how this conversation might be helpful to you”
* “Let’s see if we can figure out what you need for this call”
* “That’s not how I remember it”
* “That has not been my experience with that provider”
* “I’m not going to stay on the phone with someone who talks to me that way”

(If they try to keep you on the phone, going nowhere, they may be trying to control you. Don’t allow it to continue).