

University Survivors Movement Starter Kit for Individual Accounts

Overview

The University Survivors Movement: Origins, Purpose, and Goals

Beginning in May of 2020, dozens of survivor-centered Instagram accounts created by university students began to emerge organically across the US and UK. The admins of these activist accounts soon found one another and decided to form a coalition. This coalition now includes over 40 student-run activist groups. Though these accounts began as forums for individuals to share their stories of sexual assault safely and anonymously, almost all of these Instagram accounts have since transformed into substantial, central, and more tangible activist movements/organizations within their communities.

Our coalition now represents student activists' efforts at over 70 college campuses in the US and UK. After months of primarily serving as an internal, private support system for these activist groups, our coalition has begun to organize itself into an activist force with goals of its own. Ultimately, our only goal is to end sexual violence on all college campuses by whatever means necessary. **The following is a non-exhaustive breakdown of our present strategies for doing so:**

- Repeal of the Department of Education's restrictive, unjust 2020 amendments to Title IX final rule + bolstering and improvement of Title IX regulations as they stood pre-Trump Administration
- An end to apathy toward the issue of sexual violence at the university administrative level
- An inclusive, widespread, and sustained dialogue about sexual violence across our communities
- The proliferation and amplification of community-led, grassroots activism on all college campuses

The "Anonymous Survivors' Stories Instagram Account": Purpose and Description

Survivors on college campuses are often silenced, their stories made invisible to the larger community. Simultaneously, the only outlets survivors have for sharing their stories often require the retraumatizing action of outing oneself and/or one's perpetrator in order to be heard. Student-activists on college campuses have found a way around these issues: social media accounts that share survivors' stories anonymously and safely. The impact of these accounts is two-fold: first, these accounts provide a safe space for survivors to feel solidarity and support. Second, these accounts allow the general public to interact with these stories and to understand the structural, community-wide implications of them.

Thinking of Starting an Account? Here's What to Consider:

These accounts can be emotionally tolling and have potential community backlash. Before beginning an account here are some questions to consider:

Am I the right person to do this work? Am I a survivor or a consistent, community-trusted ally for survivors? If I am not a survivor, what qualifies me to do this work?

Will I be able to stay safe mentally and physically if I take on this work?

Am I comfortable with being an activist within my community?

Do I have the time to dedicate to this?

Is there a survivor's voice present in the programming of this page?

If I am a survivor, do I have enough emotional distance from the incident to feel comfortable being responsible for potentially triggering materials?

Am I aware of my campus' current culture and policies with respect to sexual violence? Do I feel like I will have some support once starting this platform?

If you answered no to ANY of these questions, please think about what you will specifically do to mitigate the issues that may arise as a result. Having answered no to one or more of these questions does not mean that you should not ultimately do this work; but ask yourself: should I be leading this? Are there others I should get involved in this work or from whom I should get advice? Should I be the only person involved, or should I perhaps form a team? Who should those team members be?

Getting Started:

After making the decision to start an account, here are the first steps you should take toward getting it up and running:

1. Set up a call with the leaders of one of the following accounts. They can be reached via Instagram DM and will keep all identifying information about you confidential from the public, as well as from members of the coalition:
2. Make a game plan for preserving your anonymity and the anonymity of the survivors
3. Decide on a name (instagram handle/email account)
4. Learn Canva or find someone to help you with graphic design
 - a. Create template for trigger warnings slide and stories slides
 - b. Examples:
5. Create an anonymous submissions Google Form

- a. Example:
 - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe2qpwAscb2h91INfR78Fb0vUetO965IeSQ2CHyklZtHAzBdg/viewform>
 - b. Google Form best practices:
 - i. Do not collect email addresses manually or automatically (Google Form settings will guide you on how not to do this)
 - ii. Make it clear that all submissions are anonymous and that you are non-affiliated with your institution.
 - iii. Provide an option for survivors to provide their own content warnings as to not mislabel their experiences. If they choose not to, proceed with creating your own content warning for the story.
 - iv. Consider giving survivors the option to create a password with which they can request their story to be removed without revealing their identity
6. Create your account
7. Your first few posts:
- a. Post one: Logo
 - i. Examples:
 - b. Post two: Mission Statement
 - i. Mission statement example (please do not use this wording exactly):

our mission:

To amplify the voices and stories of survivors of sexual assault at the University of Alabama

To provide a way for survivors to anonymously share their stories

To connect survivors with resources on campus and in the community.

To hold the university and organizations publicly accountable for the sexual assault occurring on campus

S P E A K
O U T

Our Mission

We want to provide a safe and supportive space for survivors to share their stories and raise awareness around the pervasiveness of sexual violence at Northeastern University.

We believe you.

Luther Survivors

We, Luther Survivors aim to hear and amplify the voices of survivors of sexual violence within the Luther College community. It is our goal to magnify the reality of sexual violence and empower survivors at Luther College to tell their stories - anonymously.

 - ii.

@alabamasurvivors
@neuspeakout
@luthersurvivors
 - c. Other options:
 - i. Community guidelines post, reposting/commenting guidelines, legal information
 - d. First story post:
 - i. Include trigger warning on first slide
 - ii. Survivor story on second/third slide

Running the Account: Best Practices

1. Redact all identifying information, including names, social media profiles, etc.
 - a. ****Disclaimer:** keep in mind: some individual accounts choose to leave identifying information, but redacting identifying information is safer, just be sure you know the potential risk for legal problems to arise in the future.**

2. To preserve your anonymity, please do not give out your contact information to other individuals unless you have vetted the person asking. There are people who may be lying about their identity to get your contact information and identity.
3. In addition, you may receive messages through Instagram DM where they are personally targeting you or intimidating you into deleting your accounts or posts. Do not let them get to you. We are not doing anything illegal unless we post anything defamatory.
4. Use your judgement when deciding what to post. For example, you can choose to post stories of survivors or post all submissions that solely further the conversation around consent and hookup culture.
 - a. Keep in mind that editing survivors' stories beyond redacting names may ostracize survivors who fear being silenced. If a survivor identifies the race, ethnicity, citizenship status, religious affiliation, or sexual orientation of their perpetrator, you will likely receive comments from individuals who share those identities and are concerned that the posts perpetuates harmful stereotypes about those identities. Rather than redacting information about the perpetrator's racial/ethnic/religious/sexual identity, we *recommend* issuing a disclaimer which discouraged people from making generalizations about individuals who share the perpetrator's marginalized identity. This disclaimer can be issued as a stand-alone post or appear in the captions of specific posts.
 - b. Some coalition members may choose to produce content in addition to sharing the stories of survivors. If you find a post on a coalition member's Instagram account that you would like to quote or emulate, please ask the original poster for permission and credit the original poster.
5. After the initial start of your account, consider possibly expanding your team to include other potential members to assist in facilitating the account. While building a team it is important to recognize that marginalized communities are significantly impacted by the effects of sexual violence, and we are passionate about building and sustaining an inclusive and equitable community for all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation and identity, national origin, age, disability, or any of the previously listed characteristics or statuses. We encourage building a team that enriches our diversity by exposing us to a broad range of ways to understand and engage with the world, identify challenges, and to discover solutions to ending sexual violence around the world.
6. Join the University Survivors Coalition
 - a. Setting up a slack
 - i. If you are not a member of our slack channel, **please request a link from any of the pages associated with the University Survivors Movement via DM, or ask in the group DM and someone will assist you.**
 - ii. Please use one slack account to represent your group of admins, and title this account with a name that relates to your original account handle.

This does not apply to any members who have communicated with the coalition regarding the use of some different username due to security concerns, anonymity, etc.

- iii. Try to have slack open on your computer most of the time, or alternatively, download the slack app to stay up to date. Not much is posted in our slack, but it is where we organize our meeting times and agendas.
- iv. Slack will be used as the source of conversation regarding meeting agendas, documentations, best practices, and in-depth discussions.

Mental Health Disclaimer:

Running these accounts can be very emotionally laborious. It is important that you prioritize taking care of your own mental health as you continue running your page. It is okay if you need to take a break or pass the work off to a team member. If you decide to take a break, be sure to let your followers know so survivors do not feel like their submission is being ignored or invalidated.

Resources:

National Hotlines

1. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
2. National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or <https://www.rainn.org/about-national-sexual-assault-telephone-hotline>
3. National Domestic Violence Hotline (**Spanish**) 1-888-628-9454
4. National Domestic Violence Hotline (**Hearing Impaired**), 1-800-799-4889

The Trevor Project

1. TrevorLifeline, 1-866-488-7386
2. TrevorChat, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/>
3. TrevorText, text “START” to 678-678 (standard text messaging rates apply).

The Crisis Text Line

1. The Crisis Text Line, text “HOME” to 741741

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

1. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), (800) 950-NAMI (6264) or text “NAMI” to 741741