

FOLLOW MY LEAD



Reflective questions to responders

- Please describe a specific example of what following a victim-survivors lead has looked like?
- What is one assumption, habit, or discomfort you have to manage in yourself to not take over, in order to follow the person's lead?
- All organisations and roles have constraints and limits. Have you found a way to follow a persons lead within the constraints/rules that you can't change. What do you think about when you do that?
- We won't ever know what our approach might have meant to the victim-survivor at the time, and over time, but what difference do you think this made 'in the moment'?

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I will give this example, I had a client who also was an older person who had much trauma in her life. And I hadn't heard about the majority of it except to know it was there and she was the victim of a very terrible sexual assault which she did want to talk about, and it was a crisis. And she was needing to come to a refuge, but her main priority was her animals and having her animals cared for. So, I must have spent three days, you know, on the phone to get her into a refuge.

She didn't drive - she was in a remote location. Getting her safe transport to the refuge to actually leave the risk of the situation she was in, was very challenging. There was only certain people she was prepared to get into a vehicle with. She didn't have any money. So, she was very limited in terms of public transport, and she was very remote so she really needed the safety of a trusted organisation that she could go with. And it wasn't our organisation it was another, so that was the challenge.

But the bigger, and equally important challenge for her was having her animals moved as well. So, nobody teaches you how to relocate livestock and animals. And, very, very fortunately a wonderful other person at an animal shelter totally went outside her, you know, 'lane', to accept the animals into the animal shelter, with no charge. Then the challenge was once we secured those two pieces of the puzzle, was how to get the animals transported from this remote location into the animal shelter.

So, we went and we ended up using community transport to be able to transport animals and pets, and quite a number of them into there. She was happy with the transport which got the animals onto this little minibus. Then once she knew they were going there, then she was okay to leave. She actually would not have left her situation had she not been able to know that her animals were safe.

This was an older person, who is childless, with no family and I think, you know, giving her the dignity of honoring her wishes to make sure her animals were safe, before she put her safety as one of her priorities, you know, that was obviously a day (or part of a week) where priorities in terms of the phone ringing and somebody else needing advice, and you know there's not a lot of data entry that goes in to that type of piece of work in terms of how many clients you serviced or how many pieces of legal advice, for me, I was able to give during that time.

That's not a job that anybody you know gets taught how to do in a university, but I think that for me that is probably, you know, when we take all those titles away, and those job descriptions away, I guess that is what I kind of thought of when you asked that question.