Have you ever had that little voice inside tell you that something is not right; that you might be in danger? Listen to it.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Sexual assault is underreported, especially on college campuses. The theme for Sexual Assault Awareness Month this year is: “Prevention is Possible”. Since sexual violence is a pervasive problem, it’s important to be aware that there are many ways to take action. Taking action involves safety, respect, equality, and accountability. Taking action along these lines can prevent sexual assault before it has a chance to happen. Think of the possibilities.

By promoting safe behaviors, thoughtful policies, and healthy relationships the root problems can be addressed. Communication is the key. For example: **No Means No**. Once the other person says “NO” all sexual activity needs to stop. It is unacceptable to use the excuse that the other person can’t stop or that it has gone too far. If you are in the backseat of a car and a police officer suddenly shines a spotlight in the car, I would be willing to bet that all sexual activity comes to an abrupt stop at that time.

One of the things that each of us can do is take a part in creating safe environments. Intervene if you see someone displaying problematic or disrespectful behavior. Promote and model healthy attitudes, behaviors, and relationships in your daily life. Most importantly, believe survivors and assist them in finding resources and help.

This past September, our university became part of the “It’s On Us” movement. Students, faculty, and staff were encouraged to take a pledge to commit to help keep women and men safe from sexual assault. It is a promise to be part of the solution by pledging to **recognize** that non-consensual sex is sexual assault, to **identify** situations in which sexual assault may occur, to **intervene** in situations where consent has not or cannot be given, and to **create** an environment in which sexual assault is unacceptable and survivors are supported.

No one has the right to force someone else to have sex. It’s even more important to remember that, no one ever asks to be raped. Sexual assault is equal opportunity. Victims come from all walks of life. They may be any age, gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic group. As hard as it is to reach out after a sexual assault, it’s harder to go through it alone. Sexual assault takes away from the victim control over the most personal and private aspect of their life: what happens to their body. Nobody deserves that. Nobody.

The Counseling Center is here to listen and understands what you are going through. Don’t hesitate to call 903-886-5145 or stop by 204 Halladay Student Services. Other resources include: the Crisis Center of Northeast Texas, 903-424-9999 and the National Sexual Assault Hotline, 800-656-HOPE.