

Sexual Assault Help

Ways to Lower Your Risk of Sexual Violence — For Women & Men

1. Be aware of your surroundings. There is a higher chance of avoiding sexual assault just by being aware of what and who is around you. Being cautious and alert can only be to your benefit.
2. Know your sexual desires and limits.
Believe in your right to set those limits. Be aware of social pressures.
3. Communicate your limits as clearly as possible. If someone starts to offend you, tell him/her early and firmly. Being polite is O.K. As long as you are firm and assertive. Say “no” when you mean “no” and be prepared to repeat it.
4. Dress comfortably. Dress as you please. However, non-restrictive clothing could be an advantage. Nobody asks to be sexually violated or raped. Be aware that if someone ignores your limits and assertiveness, you want to be able to run and fight back if needed. Tight clothing, high heels, or baggy pants could be a disadvantage if you need to move quickly.
5. Avoid excessive use of alcohol and drugs.
Alcohol and drugs interfere with clear thinking and effective communication.
6. Being turned down when you ask for sex is not a rejection of you personally.
Women or men who say “No” to sex are not rejecting the person; they are expressing their desire to not participate in a single act. Your desires may be beyond your control but your actions are within your control.
7. Accept the person’s decision. “No” means “No”. Don’t read other meanings into the answer. Don’t continue after “NO!” Do not assume that just because a person dresses in a sexy manner and flirts that they want to have sexual intercourse. Do not assume that previous permission for sexual contact applies to the current situation.
8. Protect Yourself. If you are walking alone, try to have a whistle with you. If you find yourself in danger, blow the whistle to attract attention for help. Another item that may help you if in danger is chemical mace, to spray in attackers eyes. Using items such as keys, pencils, pens, or books can also be used to defend yourself against an attacker.

Nine Ways to Lower Your Risk of Rape

Rape is not just an act committed in a dark alley by an unknown assailant. The truth is that most Rapes occur in the victim’s home. About 60% of victims who report their Rape know their assailants.

It is possible, however, to be aware without being afraid. Thinking and talking about the different types of sexual assault, and what you might do if you ever find yourself in a bad situation, can increase your chances of avoiding Rape.

1. Always walk briskly; look alert and confident, avoid carrying objects requiring use of both arms.
2. Stay away from isolated areas, day or night.
3. Never walk alone when it is dark.
4. If you are being followed, get away fast, change directions, and walk or run to a crowded area.
5. Lock all doors to your car and residence at all times.
6. Before you drive home, call your roommate, family or a friend so they will expect you and be aware if you are excessively late.
7. Encourage group activities in early stages of a relationship.
8. Take a self-defense class.
9. Be aware of legislation that concerns your gender and contact legislators to express your views.

What To Do In A Risky Situation

- Stay calm-consider your options and how safe it would be to resist.
- Say “NO” strongly. Do not smile; do not act polite or friendly.

- Say something like “Stop it. This is Rape!” This might shock the rapist into stopping.
- If the rapist is unarmed, fight back physically, shout “NO!” and run away as soon as possible.
- If the rapist is armed, try to talk him out of continuing the assault, or try passive resistance (pretend to faint/vomit/urinate).

What To Do In Case Of A Rape

- Get to a safe place.
- Call a friend or family member to be with you.
- Breathe deeply and remind yourself that you are of value, and that what has happened is wrong and in no way your fault.
- Call the police. A crime has been committed.
- Do not bathe, douche or change clothes.
You may be destroying legal evidence, regardless of whether you pursue legal action or not.
- Go to a hospital emergency department for medical care. This can be done without police intervention, if that is your choice.
- Write down as much as you can remember about the circumstance of the assault and the identity of your assailant.
- Seek the counseling and legal assistance from a rape treatment center. The counselor there can help you deal with the consequences of an assault.

Reporting the assault is a way of regaining your sense of personal power and control. It enables you to actively protest the violent crime that has been committed against you.

Reporting and prosecuting the assailant are essential in establishing new norms that this behavior is NOT okay. Taking legal steps helps prevent rape and protect other potential victims.

How To Help A Friend

- Believe your friend. A few people are going to act as if your friend has lied or done something wrong. She/he will need your support.
- Listen carefully and do not laugh. People often laugh if they are embarrassed or nervous.
- Help your friend to report the rape to someone who can help - a counselor, school nurse, parent, child protective service worker, teacher, or police officer.
- Let your friend know it is not her/his fault. People who have been touched inappropriately often feel that they have done something wrong.
- Be confidential and protect your friend's privacy. Talk to a trusted adult if this situation is bothering you.
- Be verbal in letting your friend know that you care and that you support her/him.

Dating Violence

Myth: Abuse means physically hurting someone.

Fact: Abuse does not only mean physically hurting someone. Abuse also includes hurting someone psychologically/emotionally, verbally or sexually. One in three teenagers experiences violence in a dating relationship. Dating violence is aggressive, abusive and controlling behavior.

A Few Warning Signs That Your Date May Have An Abusive Behavior

- Possessive

- Controlling
- Bad tempered/easily angered
- Isolates you from your friends or family
- Blames others for his/her problems
- Threatens force or violence
- Uses force during arguments
- Verbally abusive

Is Your Relationship Unhealthy? Ask Yourself These Questions...

- Are you afraid of your partner?
- Does your partner choose who you hang out with?
- Is your partner making decisions for you?
- Does your partner humiliate you?
- Has your partner's jealousy limited your independence?
- Has your partner ever kicked or punched you?
- Are you afraid your partner may do these things?

Answering "yes" to the above questions is a definite sign of an unhealthy relationship.
(Provided by Network for Battered Women)

Ways to Prevent Dating Violence

- Consider double dates or being with a group when first going out.
- When going out, let a friend or parent know when you will be back. Tell your date that you have done this so he/she will acknowledge that someone is expecting you back at a certain time.
- Be assertive and direct. Be able to be straightforward about what you want, like or dislike in a relationship. Having these goals or plans will help create a positive outlook on the relationship.

Help is Available

- Remember that you are of importance and no one deserves to be abused or threatened. Turn to someone you can trust such as a teacher, family member, friend, counselor at psychological services, or a nurse at Health Services. These resources are here to specifically help you, so now it is your step to go there. (If you are under 18 years, teachers, healthcare providers and law enforcement agencies are required to report suspected abuse to Child Protective Services).

Help Someone Else

If you know someone who might be in an abusive relationship:

- Tell them you are worried.
- Be a good listener.
- Ask how you can help them seek help.

Domestic Violence

Myth: Domestic violence is not common.

Fact: Every nine seconds a woman in the United States is beaten by one who claims to love her. (Support Network for Battered Women)

Domestic Violence is legally defined as when spouses or intimate partners use physical violence, threats, emotional abuse, harassment or stalking to control the behavior of their partners. Domestic Violence is a crime, a learned behavior, and is a choice.

Think about the following questions to distinguish whether you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence

- Has your partner or spouse ever hurt or threatened you or your children?
- Has your partner or spouse ever hurt your pets, broken objects in your home, or destroyed something that you especially cared about?
- Does your partner or spouse throw or break objects in the home during arguments?
- Does your partner or spouse act jealously, for example, always calling you at work or home to check up on you?
- Does your partner or spouse accuse you of flirting with others or having affairs?
- Does your spouse or partner make it hard for you to find or keep a job or to go to school?
- Does your partner ever force you to have sex when you wish not to, or make you do things during sex that you do not want to?

Steps to Take in Getting Out of Domestic Violence

- Call National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Ask for the nearest shelter and how to get there.
- Call family and friends and see if they would be willing to provide transportation, shelter, or anything else you may need.
- If you are unable to stay with family or friends, choose a hotel/motel in which you can stay. Find out the quickest way there.
- Also know that police stations, fire stations and hospitals are always a safe place to go. Make sure to know the fastest way to get there.

Five Ways to Eliminate Domestic Violence

1. Know what Domestic Violence is.
When a spouse or intimate partner uses physical violence, threats, emotional abuse, harassment, or stalking to control the behavior of their partners, they are committing domestic violence
2. Develop a Safety Plan.
If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, develop a safety plan. This may include setting aside an extra pair of keys, money, passports, etc. to ensure the fastest and safest route out of your home. Know where you can go ahead of time once leaving your home. Try to remember the crisis hotlines, as they can assist you at anytime.
3. Call 911.
Domestic violence is a crime. If you or someone you know is being battered, call 911 immediately for help.
4. Exercise your rights.
You and anyone you know who may be experiencing domestic violence have the right to go to court and petition for an order of protection.
5. Get help for you (and/or you and your family).
There are shelters dedicated to victims of domestic violence. Be sure to call National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) to find the shelter nearest you. If not choosing a shelter, do call the crisis hotline to assist you. They are here specifically to aid in your needs.

Remember, no one deserves abuse and that there is no excuse for domestic violence.

Who to Call for Help

- Police 911
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1 (800) 799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)
- Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- Office for Victims of Crime @ <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/welcome.html>

Community Services (Ridgecrest, CA)

- Women's Center High Desert (760) 371-1969
- Family Resource Center (760) 375-4357

COMMON MYTHS VERSUS FACTS ABOUT ASSAULT:

Myth: Rape is just unwanted sex, and isn't really a violent crime.

Fact: Rape is more than just unwanted sex. Rape is an act of violence because the rapist uses force as a motive for power and control. One out of every eight adult women has been a victim of forcible Rape. (National Victim Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, 1992).

Myth: Sexual assault is a crime of passion and lust.

Fact: Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Assailants seek to dominate, humiliate, and punish their victims.

Myth: A person who has really been sexually assaulted will be hysterical.

Fact: Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, anger, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way.

Myth: Sexual assault is an impulsive act.

Fact: Seventy-five percent of all assaults are planned in advance.

Myth: Assailants are usually crazed psychopaths who do not know their victims.

Fact: As many as 80% of all assaults involve acquaintances. An assailant might be someone you know intimately, such as a coworker, a friend or a family member.

Myth: Persons who dress or acts in a "sexy" way are asking to be sexually assaulted.

Fact: Many convicted sexual assailants are unable to remember what their victims looked like or were wearing. Nothing a person does or does not do causes a brutal crime like sexual assault.

Myth: It is impossible to sexually assault a man.

Fact: Men fall victim for the same reasons as women" they are overwhelmed by threats or acts of physical and emotional violence. Also, most sexual assaults that involve an adult male victim are gang assaults.

Myth: As long as children remember to stay away from strangers, they are in no danger of being assaulted.

Fact: Sadly, children are usually assaulted by acquaintances; a family member or other caretaking adult. Children are usually coerced into sexual activity by their assailant, and are manipulated into silence by the assailant's threats and/or promises, as well as their own feelings of guilt.

Myth: A lot of times a rape could be prevented if the person had only fought harder.

Fact: The only person who can prevent a rape is the person who commits it. Sometimes, fighting can increase the chances of getting seriously hurt.

Common Myths versus Facts about Assault: College of the Redwoods
<http://www.redwoods.edu/eureka/sexualhealth/MYTHS.asp>