

RAPE

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Rape

If you or someone you know has been raped you can call the Rape Recovery Center Crisis 24 Hour Line 467-7273. You can go to <http://www.raperecoverycenter.com> for more information on the Rape Recovery Center.

Rape happens frequently, but survivors of rape are just as frequently afraid to discuss the experience. Rape differs significantly from all other crimes because a person's body is violated in an extremely sensitive way. Although women can rape men and other women, most rapes are committed by men. Men are the primary violators in both male and female rapes.

Men Raping Women

When men rape women, women frequently feel ashamed, guilty and depressed. These emotional effects are reflected in the low rate of reporting among rape survivors. For every reported rape, an estimated three to ten go unreported. Less than 10% of survivors will report the assault, and less than 5% of the rapists will go to jail.

More than half of the rapes in the United States are acquaintance rapes. Acquaintance and date rapes may not be recognized as "real" rape by the survivor, her support system, or the public. An acquaintance rape survivor may feel that she was forced to have intercourse but will deny she was raped. Survivors of date and acquaintance rape frequently tend to feel more ashamed, guilty, and depressed than stranger rape survivors.

In 73% of cases where men raped women, the victim did not believe that she had been raped. Over one-third did not discuss the incident with anyone; only 5% reported it to the police.

44% of male college students reported some likelihood of "forcing a female to do something sexual she didn't want to" if they wouldn't be punished or found out. A frightening statistic that shows there is still much work to be done socializing men to reject violence as a norm.

Men Raping Men

There are few statistics about the numbers of men raping men in this country. Not

surprisingly in our culture, men who are raped by men may have extreme fears about reporting their experiences. Homophobia, both internalized and external, may play a large role in the lack of rape reporting. It is important to remember that rape is a violent crime and perpetration or victimization in a same sex rape is NOT an indicator of sexual orientation. Male victims of rape need just as much support and understanding as female victims. Just as a woman raped by man, a man raped by another man may prefer to talk to a woman about his experience.

Signs and Symptoms of Rape Survivors

Many survivors of rape suffer from Rape Trauma Syndrome. Symptoms include loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, nightmares, extreme phobias, preoccupation with the rape, anxiety about leaving the home and being with other people, inability to concentrate on studies or work, and sexual dysfunction. Rape Trauma Syndrome has three stages:

- Acute Phase
 - Emotions may be expressed as physical symptoms: headaches, sleeplessness, nausea and/or muscle spasms. In addition, survivors usually experience confusion, depression, anxiety, nightmares and jumpiness.
- Chronic Phase
 - After several days, a survivor can become preoccupied with her/his role in the rape by replaying memories to figure out how the rape might have been prevented. Another temporary "adjustment" period is based on denial of the incident.
- Long-Term Reorganization Phase
 - Often six or more months pass before the victim comprehends and incorporates the reality of the experience. Survivors often may feel they need to process the event many times with persons they trust until they feel they have reconciled it. They may also take a lot of time to feel safe and secure again.

How can I help someone who's been raped?

Immediately after a Rape

The survivor needs a comforting, supportive person with him/her at all times. Don't ask a lot of questions. Don't blame the survivor in any way or talk about what might have been done or what you would have done. Be supportive. Remind them they are safe now.

Praise her/him for having the courage to talk about what has happened. Give the survivor as many choices about what will happen as possible. Do not re-victimize the survivor by calling police or family members against the survivors wishes. *Encourage the survivor to take action . If the survivor agrees you may help by:*

- Asking about and locating the survivor's support system and assisting the survivor with phone calls if necessary.
- Contacting Health and Wellness Services. During regular hours the staff of Health and wellness Services are available to help in crisis situations.
- Contacting the Rape Recovery Center Crisis 24 Hour Line 467-7273. Trained volunteers can talk to the survivor and give you and the survivor information about what to do next.
- Contacting the police. The sooner they a report is made, the greater chances the attacker will be caught.
- Staying with the survivor during the police questioning. The survivor will be asked to give a detailed account of the rape, this may be extremely stressful and it is important for the survivor to have support available.
- Cautioning the survivor to refrain from showering, bathing, douching, or destroying any of the clothing worn at the time of the assault. A survivor should try not to disturb anything in the area where the assault occurred. It is important to preserve all physical evidence for court use. Do not, however, re-victimize the survivor by insisting on anything that makes the survivor uncomfortable.

- Getting the survivor medical attention. Note: The survivor may be in shock and unaware of the severity of her/his physical injuries. You should strongly encourage a rape survivor to receive medical attention, even if the person does not show any signs of injury and does not want medical attention. However, be aware that the medical exam following a rape is extremely intrusive (frequently called the "second rape"). Survivors will need information about what is going to happen and will need a strong support system in place before receiving medical attention. Make sure to request an evaluation to determine the risks of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Asking the survivor to write down a description surrounding the assault and the attacker if appropriate. Police need all the information they can gather about the assailant.

Delayed Rape Reaction

Sometimes a rape survivor can't deal with anything to do with the rape for quite some time, or they may have blocked out the event only to remember it at a later date. They should be encouraged to seek assistance at any time. This can be accomplished by contacting a counselor, The Rape Recovery Center, or by notifying the police. Delayed rape reactions should be handled with as much consideration as immediate rapes.

What to say to a delayed rape survivor

- Be supportive. Validate what he/she is telling you.
- Reassure the person that what they are feeling is normal and help is available.
- Praise her/him for having the courage to talk about what has happened.
- Encourage them to seek professional help.
- Let them know the resources that will be able to give them assistance.

What happens when I report a rape?

When a rape is reported to the police they begin an immediate investigation. Victims of rape will be asked to give a detailed account of the rape and the surrounding

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circumstances. Victims will also need to have a medical examination that may last up to 4 hours. It is important for the victim to have supportive friends or family with them during this time.

Great Links

For more information on rape and sexual assault, link up with these other great sites. Or come by the Health and Wellness Office.

- For more information about rape prevention go to: www.ncf.ca/ip/sigs/life/feminism/safety/rape.prev
- For advice on not committing sexual assault go to: www.ncf.ca/ip/sigs/life/feminism/safety/rapemen.2