



Common Myths about Sexual Assault

Myth: "They asked for it."

Reality: No person deserves to be sexually assaulted, and no person asks for it or wants it. A person's clothing is not an indication of their consent.

Myth: "Most survivors are sexually assaulted by strangers."

Reality: It is estimated that 80-85% of perpetrators are someone the survivor knows. Acquaintance rape by a friend, new acquaintance, or coworker is frequent. Most survivors are assaulted by people they trust.

Myth: "Most survivors are sexually assaulted in unfamiliar, dark places and can avoid situations that lead to sexual assault."

Reality: Most survivors are assaulted in environments they consider to be safe. Statistics show that 50% of sexual assaults occur in or around a person's home and 50% occur during the day.

Myth: "People often falsely accuse others of sexual assault."

Reality: Sexual assaults are vastly underreported. Of reported sexual assaults, the vast majority are factual. Less than 2% of reported sexual assaults are false. It is more common for burglaries/robberies to be falsely reported than sexual assaults.

Myth: "It can't happen to me."

Reality: People from every population are sexually assaulted: people of all ethnic backgrounds, sexualities, and gender identities; children and elderly, rich and poor, married and single. No one is exempt from the threat of sexual assault.

Myths about Situations

Myth: "It's not sexual assault if the couple is dating or is married."

Reality: Regardless of the nature of the relationship, if a person does not consent to sexual activity, they are being sexually assaulted.

Myth: "Only women are sexually assaulted; it is impossible to sexually assault a man."

Reality: People of all genders can be sexually assaulted; perpetrators may be of any gender and can be of any sexual orientation.

Myth: "Homosexual men are more likely to be the perpetrators of sexual assault against men and boys."

Reality: Statistics show that heterosexual men commit 96-98% of all sexual violence against persons of all sexes or gender identities.

Myth: "Perpetrators want sex and they 'lose control' of their sexual desires."

Reality: Many people have sexual desires, but not everyone commits sexual assault. Sexual assault is an act of power and control.

Myths about Behaviors

Myth: “Someone who was drinking or drunk when sexually assaulted is at least partially to blame.”

Reality: The perpetrator, not the survivor, is to blame for an assault. Alcohol may make someone incapable of giving consent or protecting themselves, but it is *not* the cause of the assault.

Myth: “If someone doesn’t fight back, then it was not really sexual assault.”

Reality: The survivor may be unable to fight back or they can protect themselves from further harm by not fighting back. Just because a survivor does not fight back does not mean they consent to the assault.

Myth: “Sexual assault is just the result of miscommunication or a mistake.”

Reality: Sexual assault is a crime, never a simple mistake. The perpetrator is aware that the person they are assaulting does not enjoy it and did not consent to it.

Myth: “Sometimes ‘no’ means ‘yes.’”

Reality: No always means NO! When someone says ‘no’ that person’s wishes should be respected.

Myth: “If children remember to stay away from strangers, they are in no danger of being assaulted.”

Reality: Children are often sexually assaulted by acquaintances, family members, or other caretaking adults.

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

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

Myth: “If a person ejaculates/orgasms when they are assaulted, then it is not really sexual assault.”

Reality: An orgasm can be a natural biological reaction that someone cannot control. Having an orgasm does not mean that someone “enjoyed” what their body just experienced, or that they wanted it.

For more information on myths visit:

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/svab/myths.shtml>

<http://www.voicesandfaces.org/rape.asp>

For more information contact:

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