

# Rape: Tough Questions, No Easy Answers

It can't happen to me, or could it? Who would believe me? What did I do to turn that nice guy into a sex maniac? Could it have been my fault? Was I too spaced out? It couldn't happen to me...or could it? Most of us don't want to even think about rape. We say to ourselves, "It's not going to happen to me." However, it can happen - at home, at school, at a party anywhere. A rapist can attack anyone, anytime, anywhere. No one is immune from rape or its shattering aftereffects. Don't try to protect yourself with half-truths and myths. In addition, please don't pass them on to your friends. Get the facts! Talk about them! Awareness is the first step.

## The Facts of Life

**Myth:** Rape is a crime of passion.

**Fact:** Rape is an act of violence, not passion. It is an attempt to hurt and humiliate, using sex as the weapon.

**Myth:** Rape only happens to women who ask for it.

**Fact:** No one asks to be a victim of sexual violence. It can happen to anyone - children, grandmothers, students, working women, mothers, wives, the rich and poor. Rapists tend to prey on women who look vulnerable, appear to be easily intimidated, or seem to be daydreaming.

**Myth:** Most rapes occur as a "spur of the moment" act in a dark alley by a stranger.

**Fact:** Rape often occurs in one's home - be it apartment, house or dormitory. Very often, the victim in some way knows the rapist and the rape is carefully planned.

**Myth:** Most rapists only rape one time.

**Fact:** Most rapists rape again and again and again - until caught.

## What You Can Do

There is no perfect way to protect yourself, but there are simple things you can do to minimize your risk. Just take a minute to think about what you do... And remember-

### **Be Alert!**

- Show that you're in control - walk with confidence.
- Be aware of your surroundings - who's out there and what's going on.
- Don't let alcohol or other drugs fog your judgment.
- Be assertive - don't let anyone violate your space.

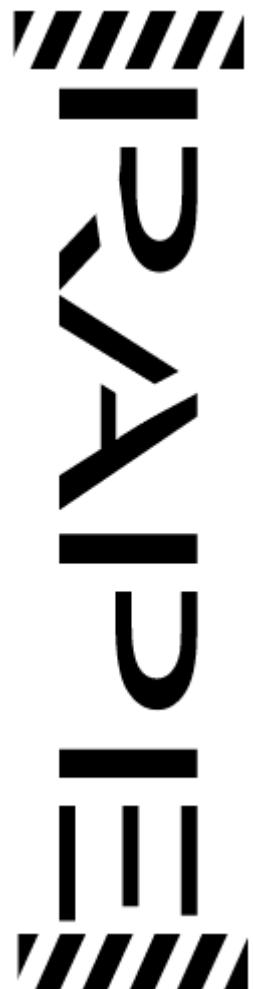
### **Trust Your Instincts!**

- Uneasy? Uncomfortable? Get out!
- Don't be embarrassed to make a scene. YOU know what's best for you.

### **Make It a Habit...**

Inside

- Don't prop open self-locking doors! It may be a hassle, but the security is worth it.
- Lock your door (and your windows), even if you leave for a few minutes. Don't leave an open invitation.
- Watch your keys. Don't lend them. Don't leave them. Don't lose them. Moreover, don't put your name and address on your key ring.
- Watch out for unwanted visitors - know who's on the other side of the door before you open it.



- Uninvited guests? Demand they leave, or you leave quickly.
- Watch those isolated areas Laundromats, library stacks, labs, locker rooms, computer centers especially at night. Go with a friend or use the campus escort service.

## Outside

- Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night. Vary your route; stay in well-traveled, well-lighted areas.
- Have your key ready before you reach the door - home, car, work, or dorm.
- Park in well-lighted areas and lock the car, even if you'll only be gone a few minutes.
- Drive on well-traveled streets doors and windows locked.
- The best advice on hitchhiking? Don't! It's very risky business. Never pick anyone up, no matter how nice they seem or look.
- Keep your car in good shape with plenty of gas in the tank.
- In case of car trouble Hood up, doors locked, "Help, call police" banner in rear window.

## What If Someone Tries?

Use your head to protect your body. Calm down play for time. Every situation is different there are no easy answers.

- Know yourself and your capabilities.
- Assess the circumstances look for an out.
- Try to read the rapist motivation, personality, what might work to get away.

And remember, once you use violence, there is no place to go but more violence.

## After The Assault

- Be a good witness remember every detail you can.
- Do not shower, bathe, douche, or throw away any clothing.
- Call the police and a friend or the rape crisis center if you need additional support.
- Seek medical attention and counseling.
- Remember that it's not your fault.

## From Victim to Survivor

Rape is a traumatic experience. The pain may go away, but the mental anguish may linger on; *Anger, Helplessness, Fear, Shame*.

If someone you know has been raped, encourage her to talk and to seek counseling.

The rape victim needs, *Support, Love, and Comfort* from friends and family to work through the crisis and emerge a survivor.