

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FACTS AND PREVENTION TIPS

Sexual Assault

The victim of a sexual assault (rape) could be a neighbor, close friend, relative or even you. It is one of the fastest growing crimes in the country and the least reported. The FBI estimates that one in four women and one in twelve men will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

Acquaintance/date rape involves someone the victim knows and could have met on campus. Victims in acquaintance rapes are more often confused about what is happening because acquaintance rapists, unlike stranger rapists, often become conciliatory after the assault. If you sense a danger of sexual assault the most important thing to remember is to remain calm and avoid being isolated with the attacker. Immediately attempt to leave the scene and go to the nearest lighted public place. You may wish to attempt verbal or physical resistance.

Verbal Resistance

- There are many ways to use your voice to protect yourself.
- Trust your feelings about whether yelling or talking calmly would help you the most.

Physical Resistance

- Use your body or other available weapons, and escape.
- An available weapon could include an umbrella, lamp, ashtray, bottle or purse.
- Five vital targets on the attacker are the eyes, nose, throat, groin and knees.
- Be realistic about your ability to protect yourself.
- You must feel confident with whatever measures you decide to adopt.

Preventive Measures

Home:

- Lock all doors and windows at all times.
- Replace or re-key locks when you move into a new home or apartment.
- Install a door viewer and a one-inch deadbolt lock in all entrance doors.
- Leave outside and inside lights on at night.
- Pull all drapes and blinds completely closed.
- Leave a TV or radio on so it does not appear that you are alone.
- If you live alone, use your initials only on mailboxes and in the telephone directory.
- Never open your door to a stranger and require identification from repairmen.
- If you receive an obscene phone call, hang up and call the police.
- Do not give personal information over the telephone.

Driving:

- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Make sure you have enough gas to reach your destination.
- Park in well-lighted areas and have your keys ready when you return to your car.

- Travel on well-lighted streets and avoid isolated roads and shortcuts.
- Never leave your house keys with your car keys at a service station.
- Keep your car doors locked at all times and the windows rolled up when possible.
- If you have car trouble, raise the hood, get back inside and lock the doors. If someone stops to help don't get out of your car, and roll the window down only enough to convey your message.
- Keep some change in your car for telephone calls.
- Keep a "Send Police" sign in your car.

Walking:

- Never accept a ride or hitchhike.
- Stay in well-lighted areas and avoid shortcuts and deserted areas.
- When possible, avoid walking alone.
- Walk in areas where other people are present.
- Walk facing traffic.
- If a driver stops to ask for directions, avoid getting too near the car.

Children:

- Children should be made aware of the dangers of accepting rides from, talking to or opening doors to strangers.
- Children should be encouraged to talk to their parents should a problem occur with a stranger, friend or relative.
- Children should know a safe, well-traveled route to and from school, and avoid isolated areas.
- Teenaged baby-sitters should accept jobs only with people they know. Baby-sitters should be instructed to call the police if anything suspicious happens and they should never open the door to strangers. The sitter's parents should be called at the end of the evening to inform them that the sitter will be home shortly.

If you are victimized, do the following:

- Get to a safe place as soon as you can. Go to the nearest lighted public place.
- Do not change clothes, shower, bathe or douche. Physical evidence is needed in court.
- Protect the crime scene. If the attack did not happen in your residence, try to recall the area you were taken to.
- Get medical attention as soon as possible. A medical examination will provide any necessary treatment and collect important evidence. Injuries may not be immediately apparent.
- Reporting the assault does not mean that the survivor must prosecute, but it begins the legal process if the survivor decides to prosecute at a later date.
- You may have rights to compensation if you report the incident to the police.
- Contact someone you trust to be with you and support you.
- Talk with counselors who will maintain confidentiality and help explain your options.

Anyone who sees someone in a risky situation can intervene and make a difference. This is known as *bystander intervention*. How you intervene can vary based on the situation and your comfort level. You could directly approach either or both parties and let them know why you are intervening. If you feel you are not the best person to intervene you could find friends of either party and encourage them to intervene, or if the situation is too serious you could call Campus

Police. You could also use a distraction to diffuse the situation without confronting anyone. Step in and change the subject or tell your friend that you need to talk with him or her. This can give the person at risk the chance to get to a safe place.

Some of this information was taken from the website of the *Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)* at <https://www.rainn.org/national-resources-sexual-assault-survivors-and-their-loved-ones>, or used with permission from the website of the *College of Biblical Studies* in Houston, TX.

Domestic and Dating Violence

Domestic violence is when a person physically or psychologically harms a blood relative or any current or former intimate partner, family member, roommate or dating partner. Domestic violence is said to be the leading cause of injury to women in the United States and results in a female being injured every 15 seconds. Victims come in all ages, races, socioeconomic levels, religions and from both genders.

One-fourth of all relationships include violence. Victims often have feelings of helplessness, isolation, guilt, fear and shame. However, they are not the cause of someone else's violent behavior nor do they deserve to be abused. All individuals have the right to make their own choices, including the decision to leave an abusive relationship.

Indications of domestic violence include a partner or family member who:

- Constantly tracks a victim's schedule and whereabouts.
- Controls a victim by being demanding and overbearing.
- Discourages the victim's relationships with others.
- Forces the victim to account for any money that they spend.
- Is jealous, possessive and accuses the victim of being unfaithful.
- Humiliates the victim in front of others.
- Destroys personal property or items of sentimental value.
- Threatens the victim or their children with physical violence.
- Hits, punches, kicks, chokes or slaps the victim.
- Forces the victim to have sex against their will.

Victims or persons who are aware of domestic violence situations should not ignore the problem:

- It will not stop or get better on its own.
- The longer a person stays in the relationship the more intense the violence will become.
- Part of the abusers power comes from secrecy and isolation.
- Encourage the victim to reach out for help.

It is important for a victim to plan ahead and know what they will do if attacked again:

- Decide where to go ahead of time.
- Pack a bag in an accessible place and have it ready to go.
- Be sure to take money, a checkbook, credit cards, important papers and medications.

Victims should seek assistance from the following organizations:

- Local police, 9-1-1.
- Campus Police.
- Seminary counseling services.
- Local counseling services.
- Local crisis centers.
- Local women's shelters.
- The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence hotline, (800) 799-7233.

Some of this information was taken from the *National Domestic Violence Hotline* at <https://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/>.

Stalking

It has been estimated that 7.5 million people will be stalked at some time in their lives. You have no control over the stalker's behavior and are not responsible for what they do. However, it can be useful to think of steps you might take to keep yourself and your loved ones safe. This is called safety planning. When making a safety plan, don't only plan around what has already happened, think about what might happen next.

Safety tips when being stalked:

- Notify the local police and Campus Police.
- Cease any further communication with the stalker.
- Make sure the stalker knows that no further contact is wanted.
- Keep a log of every incident including the date, time and what happened. Documentation is key.
- Get phone records from your phone company to demonstrate frequent calls.
- Vary your daily routine.
- Notify your family, friends, neighbors and apartment managers.
- Seek a protective order.
- Give a picture of the stalker to friends at school and work.
- Save all voicemails, text messages and emails.
- Have a colleague or officer walk you to your car.
- Make sure others know not to provide your contact information.
- If possible, change locks and upgrade your home security system.
- Update passwords to your accounts frequently.
- Adjust default settings on your phone, apps and websites.
- Do an internet search to make sure your personal information is not posted by others.
- If the stalker had access to your phone or computer they may be using Spyware to monitor you.

Some of this information was taken from the *Stalking Resource Center* at <https://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/past-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-information>.

