

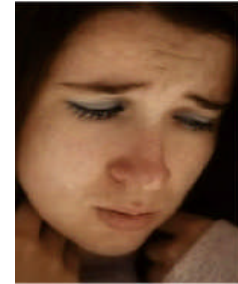


Women's Resource Center

Serving Victims Of Family Violence And Sexual Assault



What You Should Know About Rape



Rape is a frightening subject. We try to protect ourselves by not thinking about it or by believing that it happens to people who "ask for it", who are different from us, who are in places where we would never go.

But rape happens every day to people who are in no way to blame, who are just like us, who are in places we find ourselves everyday.

Ignoring rape will not protect you. Knowing what rape is and how and where it happens can be our best protection.

We need know that. . . .

RAPE IS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE. IT IS AN ACT OF SEX FORCED ON ONE PERSON BY ANOTHER TO DOMINATE, CONTROL, OR DEGRADE THAT PERSON. It is a serious crime. A rapist does not think of the victim as a person, but rather as an object. The attacker does not care how the victim feels or what the victim wants. Rape is a felony offence in California.

A person who is raped may feel the same shock and fear of injury or death as do the victims of other crimes and, like them, may suffer lingering after-effects: the loss of a sense of safety and privacy; the feeling that control has been lost over life.

Rape often goes unreported. It is estimated that only 1 in 4 rapes is ever reported to the police. Many victims feel embarrassed and/or guilty about what happened to them. They may be reluctant to tell anyone because they feel they will be blamed for the rape or not even be believed. The victim who does talk about the assault may find that the subject makes other

people uneasy and may not receive the kind of sympathetic response that is usually offered to victims of other types of crimes.

The victim's feelings and those of other people may be due to a basic misunderstanding about the nature of rape. Because it involves an act of sex, we think of rape—sometimes without even being aware of it—as a kind of sexual encounter. Our attitude toward rape may be colored by our attitudes about sex.

Few crimes are as misunderstood as rape—even by it's victims. There are a number of misconceptions about rape, the rapist and the rape victims. These are the –

MYTHS OF RAPE:

Myth: Rape is an act of aggressive sex; it is impulsive, unplanned.

Fact: Rape is an act of power and anger and has nothing to do with sexual attraction or need. It is usually planned in advance. The rapist either targets it's particular victim or picks a situation and assaults anyone who happens into that situation.

Myth: Rape is a stranger-to stranger crime, committed at night, in dark parking lots, alleys and on the street.

Fact: Rape happens at all hours of the day and night and is more likely to occur in "safe" places such as the home or car than in public places. Rape may be committed by a person known to the victim as well as by strangers. The rapist may be an acquaintance, co-worker, friend, date or even a relative.

Myth: Rape is only unwanted sex. If you can't escape, just relax and enjoy it.

Fact: Rape is a frightening assault for the victim; it is not just inconvenient sex.

Myth: Rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman—better to die than to be so defiled.

Fact: The rape victim is no more "defiled" than the victim of any other crime. Rape need not be the end of the world. With time and understanding, victims are able to heal their wounds and integrate the experience into their lives.

Myth: No person can really be raped; one can resist just by refusing to cooperate in the sex act.

Fact: Rape is not necessarily prevented merely by refusing to cooperate with the rapist. Anyone can be forced to submit if isolated, outnumbered, or threatened with violence.

Myth: Rapists are:

- Sexual deviants
- Overcome by uncontrollable sexual desires.
- Without other outlets for their sexual feelings.
- Always men.

Fact: Most who rape are "normal" but are prone to violent behavior. Some have sexual problems, but most have sex partners and normal sexual relationships. While statistics show that most rapists are men, women can be rapists, with either men or other women as their victims.

Myth: Women who are raped "ask for it" by their behavior or dress.

Fact: In order to excuse the attack, the rapist may interpret almost anything a woman does as "asking for it". But no form of dress or behavior justifies rape.

Myth: Victims secretly desire and enjoy rape.

Fact: No one wishes for the reality of rape, an

impersonal act in which one is treated as an object rather than as a person.

Myth: Rape is always brutal, resulting in serious injury to the victim.

Fact: Rape may or may not result in physical injury to the victim. Rapists usually threaten their victims but may or may not carry out the threats. The battered, bleeding, hysterical rape victim is fortunately, usually the exception, not the rule.

Myth: Victims are always attractive young women.

Fact: Rape victims are chosen for their vulnerability, not for their gender or attractiveness. Any person of any age is a potential target. Young children get raped, elderly persons get raped, so do people who are unattractive, handicapped, gay, men, prostitutes. No one is immune to sexual assault.

Myth: Women are not strong enough to resist a rapist and win. Women who try are always seriously hurt or even killed.

Fact: Women may be able to successfully resist rape. Sometimes women do resist and escape unharmed; they may do so by fighting, screaming or talking. Rapes resulting in injury or death have been planned in advance; the victim's response has little effect on the level of violence.

Myth: Victims often make false rape reports.

Fact: The number of false reports of rape is very small—only about 4% of the total reported. Rape is greatly under reported by victims.

RAPE PREVENTION

For a crime to occur, there needs to be:

- Someone with a desire to commit it
- An opportunity
- An available victim

It is difficult to prevent someone from wanting

to commit a crime, but precautions can be taken to reduce the opportunity and to make ourselves more difficult to victimize.

AT HOME

If you live alone, do not advertise it. If you use a name on your mailbox, use only your last name. Use only your last name and initial in the telephone directory, and do not have your address listed.

Meet your neighbors—know who you could call on in an emergency.

Install AND USE good locks on your doors and windows. Use them when you are at home as well as when you go out. Contact your local police or sheriff's department about home security checks and neighborhood watch programs.

Keep entrances free of obscuring walls, fences or shrubbery which could provide hiding places for an intruder.

Leave outside lights on after dark. Keep all entrances well-lighted. Install motion activated lights at all entries. If you live in an apartment building, ask your landlord to keep hallways, entrances, grounds and laundry areas well-lighted. Avoid being in isolated parts of the building alone, especially at night.

Leave an inside light on when you go out and will be returning after dark.

Protect your keys. If you must leave your keys with a parking lot attendant or service attendant, remove all but your car keys from the key ring. Do not put your name or address on your key ring.

When returning home, have your key ready before you get to the door.

Observe the entry area of your house or apartment before approaching.

If you use a remote garage door opener, observe the surrounding area before opening the door. Keep all pedestrian doors into the garage locked to prevent entry while you are out. Make sure that no one follows your car into the garage.

Do not enter your home if you observe something

suspicious or find that it has been broken into in your absence, go to a neighbor's house or public place to call police and get help.

Be cautious about admitting strangers to your home:

- Do not open your door automatically to any knock; ask first who is there.
- Ask for identification before letting in a repairman, salesman, police officer, etc. into your home.
- If strangers ask to use your phone, offer to make the call yourself. Never let them in.

Keep your shades or curtains drawn at night. Do not undress in front of an open window.

Do not give out personal information to strangers over the telephone. Instruct your children not to do so either.

If you receive a threatening or obscene phone call, hang up at once. If such calls continue, notify the police and the telephone company.

IN THE CAR

Lock all the doors when you leave your car and take your keys with you even if you'll only be gone for a short time. Check rear floor and seats before you get in.

Have your car door key in your hand before you get to the car. Observe your car as you approach.

While driving, keep the car doors locked and the windows up.

Keep the gas tank at least half full and your car in good running order.

Avoid parking in poorly lighted or isolated places at night. If you feel you have parked in a vulnerable location, ask a friend, co-worker or security guard to accompany or drive you to your car.

If your car breaks down on the highway or freeway, pull off, activate your hazard lights and call or wait for help. DO NOT accept a ride with someone who offers to take you to help.

If someone offers assistance, and you do not have a cell phone, remain in your car, roll your window down one or two inches and request that they call road service or police for you.

ON THE STREET When walking, stay in well-lighted areas and away from dark doorways and shrubbery. Don't take short-cuts across vacant lots, alleys etc. Pay attention to what is going on around you.

Avoid going out when you are alone, upset, high or drunk. You are more vulnerable to assault when you are clearly not in control of yourself.

Walk with companionship when possible—there really is "safety in numbers". AVOID walking alone at night.

If you walk or jog on a regular schedule, vary your route and/or time every few days.

Even if you are lost, don't show it. Walk quickly and with purpose.

If you think you are being followed, turn around and look behind you and if you have a cell phone, use it to call 911. Knowing that you are aware may discourage a would-be attacker. If someone changes direction to follow you, change direction and head for help.

AND EVERY WHERE ALWAYS BE ALERT AND AWARE of what is going on around you.

Act confident and sure of yourself—look like you can take care of yourself.

Don't be afraid to be "rude" or "make a scene" if you are harassed by someone. Dangerous situations sometimes develop from merely uncomfortable ones when you do not speak out and exercise your right not to be bothered.

If someone bothers you, make your objections loud and clear to let that person and everyone around you know that you object to the actions.

If you have a "sixth sense" or feeling of impending danger, **PAY ATTENTION TO IT.**

ABOUT HITCHHIKING: . . . DON'T DO IT!!!

Hitchhiking is the single most potentially dangerous situation in which you can place yourself.

IF CONFRONTED

There are differing views on the proper action to take—whether to fight first or fight only as a last resort at all. THERE IS NO "RIGHT" COURSE OF ACTION. There are many alternatives, and the "right" one for the person confronted with rape will depend on the given situation and the individual's own strengths and weaknesses.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT SUBMITTING TO RAPE IS A VALID CHOICE. It may be the best or only choice available to avoid serious harm. SUBMITTING TO RAPE IS NOT THE SAME AS CONSENTING TO SEX.

Thinking **NOW** about when and where you are the most vulnerable in your usual activities and how you might respond in different situations can better prepare you to deal with an assault. You will have more ideas to work with, if and when you need them.

BUT BE REALISTIC. You are likely to respond automatically to a rape encounter as you would to other emergencies. If you plan a course of action different from your usual behavior, you will need training to change your natural reactions.

A rape situation happens suddenly, whether it is a surprise attack or an innocent situation which becomes a threatening one. The first reactions to an assault are usually disbelief and panic.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You will need to try to regain your calm quickly; for the moment, you are your only help, and you must make yourself think and act rationally.

Assess the situation. Is your attacker armed? Are there people nearby? Can you escape? Can you resist? Can you talk your way out of the situation?

If you choose to resist, try to do so as quickly as possible and with determination. YOU MUST BE WILLING to hurt your attacker and perhaps hurt yourself. ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT YOUR GOAL IS TO ESCAPE with as little harm to yourself as possible. You are not trying to

defeat your attacker! Stay alert for every opportunity to escape. Keep trying! If one method does not work, try another and another as long as you can.

Be aware of the vulnerable areas of the attackers body—eyes, nose, groin, knees, instep.

YELL—don't scream—and keep yelling. Yell "Fire not "Rape" to get attention. If you attempt to talk to the rapist, use a calm voice. Try not to appear frightened or submissive.

Resist being taken from familiar surroundings and being further isolated.

If a social situation becomes assaultive and you cannot head it off by talking, **WALK AWAY**. If you can't leave, make your objections clear. Make the person understand how you feel about what is being done.

REMEMBER . . . WHATEVER YOU decide to do is correct. YOU are the one in the situation and THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT COURSE OF ACTION. You are the only person who knows what can be done in your particular situation.

WHAT ABOUT WEAPONS?

Carrying weapons, particularly deadly weapons, may not be advisable. They may prove useless in a given situation, or worse, may be taken and used against you. Even a person well-trained in the use of a weapon may be unable to use it quickly and decisively against a human target.

The best possible weapons are the two you always have with you—**YOUR MIND AND YOUR BODY. LEARN TO USE THEM FULLY AND WISELY.**

FOR INFORMATION IN NORTH SAN DIEGO COUNTY ON CRIME PREVENTION, HOME SECURITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PRO-GRAMS, CALL:

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

Carlsbad Police Dept	(760) 438-5511
Oceanside Police Dept	(760) 439-7296
Escondido Police Dept	(760) 741-4721
Sheriff's Dept	
Vista	(760) 758-6401
Encinitas	(760) 753-5591
Poway	(858) 748-7400
Fallbrook	(760) 728-1115

Women's Resource Center

1963 Apple Street
Oceanside, California 92054

FOR COUNSELING, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EDUCATION AND PREVENTION CALL:

(760)757-3500

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