

RAPE MYTHS

“Most sexual assaults and rapes are committed by someone the victim knows.”

Acquaintance
Rape

Sexual Violence

Rape Myths

Sexual
Harassment

Myth: *Girls say no, but really mean yes.*

Fact: Consent is a freely given, clearly stated “yes.” Silence is not consent. Being drunk or drugged and unable to understand or speak is not consent. Being passed out or unconscious is not consent.

Myth: *If she had sex with me before, she has consented to have sex with me again.*

Fact: Previous sexual conduct, including previous consent to sex, is not consent for sex right now. If she kissed you yesterday, that doesn’t mean she wants to kiss you today.

Myth: *Victims provoke rape when they dress provocatively, act sexy, go to someone’s room or house or a bar.*

Fact: Rape is never the victim’s fault. It is a crime of violence and control that stems from the perpetrator’s determination to exercise power over another. Neither a person’s clothing or behavior are invitations for unwanted sexual activity. Forcing someone to engage in non-consensual sexual activity is rape, regardless of the way that person dresses or acts.

Myth: *It’s not rape if it happens after drinking or taking drugs.*

Fact: A person under the influence of drugs or alcohol can’t consent to sexual activity. If consent isn’t given, it is rape.

Myth: *Most rapes are committed by strangers. It’s not rape if the people involved knew each other.*

Fact: Most rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. For both completed and attempted rapes, about 8 in 10 offenders were known to the victim. Rape can be committed within any type of relationship, including in marriage, in dating relationships, or by classmates, acquaintances or co-workers.

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“Anyone can be raped.”

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Myth: *A person who has really been raped will be hysterical.*

Fact: Being raped is a very traumatic experience. Victims of sexual violence exhibit a variety of responses to the assault, which can include: calm, hysteria, withdrawal, anger, apathy, denial and shock. Reactions to the rape and the length of time needed to heal from the trauma vary with each person. There is no “right way” to react to rape.

Myth: *All rape victims will report the crime immediately to the police. If they do not report it or delay in reporting it, then they must not have been raped. Either they made up the story because they're mad at their boyfriend or they're trying to stay out of trouble with their parents or they want to extort money from the guy.*

Fact: There are many reasons why a rape victim may not report the assault to the police. Only three in 10 rapes are reported to law enforcement. It is not easy to talk about being raped. The experience of re-telling what happened may cause the person to relive the trauma. Other reasons for not immediately reporting the assault, or not reporting it at all, include fear of retaliation by the offender, fear of not being believed, fear of being blamed for the assault, fear of being “revictimized”. If the case goes through the criminal justice system, the victim may believe that the offender will not be held accountable. Not recognizing that what happened was rape, shame, and/or shock are other reasons for not reporting.

Myth: *Only young, pretty women are raped.*

Fact: Anyone can be raped.