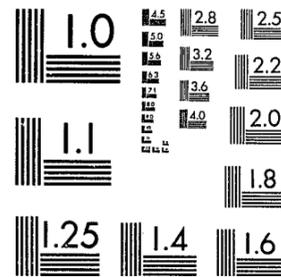


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Discussion Leader's Guide SEXUAL ASSAULT

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

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HELP!
STOP CRIME
Office of the Attorney General

HELP! STOP CRIME

NC 1110

MAR 1978

ACQUISITIONS

FOREWORD
From the Attorney General

As a companion piece to the newly revised Sexual Assault Educational Package, the HELP STOP CRIME! Program is pleased to make this Discussion Leader's Guide available to you.

We have learned a great deal about the area of sexual assault since the "Crimes Against Women" portion of the HELP STOP CRIME! Program was launched in 1974. Through statewide public opinion surveys we have determined that our prevention seminars and programs are not always reaching a broad cross-section of women in Florida. The working class, semi-skilled woman is often being neglected in our education efforts. I believe this is an area that deserves the utmost attention.

The women who have been reached through the various awareness and educational campaigns are sometimes confused as to what is the most accurate information on the subject of sexual assault. In our revised and updated educational package we are attempting to explain the many alternatives women have available regarding prevention, handling an attack situation and post-assault procedures.

Let this Discussion Leader's Guide serve as your point of reference for the presentations which you deliver. This will take us one step further toward establishing a degree of uniformity in the information made available throughout the state. There are no pat answers to sexual assault prevention, but through offering women as many alternatives as possible and the pros and cons of these alternatives we can begin to eliminate some of their confusion.

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Capitol, Tallahassee, Florida 32304 • 904/488-5804

Bob Graham, Governor

Jim Smith, Attorney General

Discussion Leader's Guide
SEXUAL ASSAULT

HELP
STOP CRIME
Office of the Attorney General

INTRODUCTION

This Discussion Leader's Guide is based on the Sexual Assault Educational Package Action Plan developed by HELP STOP CRIME! in conjunction with the Sexual Assault Revision Committee. The contents are basically the same as the information in the sexual assault booklet but an outline form has been maintained as an aid in planning and presenting a public education program. A copy of the Florida Sexual Battery Statute ("Involuntary" was dropped from the title in 1975) and the Attorney General's Model Rape Investigation Guidelines have also been included for your reference.

The other media components of the Sexual Assault Educational Package include billboards, bus advertising, bookmarks, posters and newspaper advertising. The theme throughout the media campaign is "Every Female is a Potential Victim." This is aimed at raising the awareness level of the entire population while it attacks the age, dress and lifestyle myths associated with the crime.

It is important to point out that before the prevention of sexual assault can ever be effectively dealt with, at least in the area of secondary prevention, the myriad of myths surrounding the crime must begin to be eroded. Men and women alike need to be made aware that rape is a violent, hostile, aggressive act not perpetrated for sexual gratification; they need to know who can become the victim and the other "wheres and whys" of the crime - at least inasmuch as is presently known.

There are no cut and dry answers in the prevention and control of sexual assault. But at least if all public education efforts around the state are generally speaking the same language, the entire campaign will have gained credibility and helped to erase some of the confusion in the minds of the people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

HELP STOP CRIME! owes a debt of gratitude to the many people who helped make the new Sexual Assault Educational Package a reality. Without their invaluable comments and recommendations, the task of putting together this comprehensive package would not have been possible.

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Sergeant Mike Iannone, Escambia County Sheriff's Office, Pensacola
Lieutenant John Syron, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Tampa
Sergeant James Sewell, Florida State University, Department of Public Safety, Tallahassee

and . . .

Dr. Geraldine Boozer, Director, Sex Offender Rehabilitation Program, South Florida State Hospital, Hollywood
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. . . and many others, too numerous to list.

DISCUSSION LEADER'S GUIDE
FOR
SEXUAL ASSAULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

A.) WHO IS THE VICTIM?

- 1.) Although men and women, young and old are victims of sexual assault, for the purposes and scope of this educational package the material is geared toward females and their families.
- 2.) Any female regardless of age, race, socio-economic status or life-style. Every female is a potential victim.
 - a.) Reported victims in Florida are of all ages - ranging from 2 months to 91 years.
 - b.) A relatively large clustering of reported victims fall in the 13-25 year old age bracket. (This may be due to an increased reporting rate in this age group.)
- 3.) Dramatizations of sexual assault in movies and television have reflected the public's opinion in portraying victims as only the young and attractive. The fact is - there is no stereotypic victim.
- 4.) The woman who is alone at any time for whatever reason (home, shopping, walking, etc.), is a more vulnerable target. You should always bear in mind that it could happen to you.

B.) WHERE DOES SEXUAL ASSAULT OCCUR?

- 1.) It must be stressed that sexual assault can occur virtually anywhere.
- 2.) Of all the places sexual assault can and does occur, the largest single grouping of reported instances is in either the home of the victim or the assailant.

ACTION PLAN II

-2-

- 3.) However, it is important to be aware of all potentially hazardous situations
- a.) remote areas, vacant lots
 - b.) public parks
 - c.) on the street
 - d.) deserted buildings
 - e.) parking lots and garages
 - f.) stairwells
 - g.) laundromats
 - h.) school campuses
 - i.) alleys
 - j.) beaches at night
 - k.) playgrounds at schools
 - l.) shopping centers

C.) DEMYTHOLOGIZING THE CRIME

- 1.) "Perhaps the most prevalent myth regarding rape is that most men who rape are seeking sexual gratification. Studies and interviews indicate that rapists often have consensual sexual relationships available but choose to rape because they enjoy overpowering their victim. In terms of the perpetrator's motives, rape bears a closer resemblance to violent crimes such as assault and robbery than it does to sexual intercourse with a consenting woman. This is a fact that all potential victims, their families and perspective jurors should know."¹
- 2.) Under most circumstances a rapist will act perfectly normally.

¹RAPE AND ITS VICTIMS, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, LEAA, Washington, D.C., November, 1976, p. 149.

But he is an emotionally unstable individual who has a deep-seated difficulty in relating to other people in a meaningful fashion. He views his victim as an object, not a person, upon which to vent his aggression and hostility. The rapist is not seeking sexual gratification as a motive for his crime.

- 3.) In many reported cases the rapist is someone who is known to the victim either as a friend, a relative, a co-worker, a date or casual acquaintance. You wouldn't be able to spot a rapist in a crowd. He looks perfectly normal.
 - 4.) "Peeping Toms" and exhibitionists should be considered dangerous. These acts may be only a part of a fantasy which includes sexual assault.
 - 5.) The woman does not provoke the sexual assault by her mode of dress or lifestyle. Rapists are opportunists who are looking for vulnerable targets.
 - 6.) A sexual assault can occur at any time of the day or night.
- D.) PREVENTIVE MEASURES - These precautions are suggestions to minimize the chances of attack.
- 1.) At Home

Sexual assaults can and do occur in conjunction with other crimes such as burglary. It is of the utmost importance that your home or apartment be properly secured.

 - a.) Ideally, all exterior doors should be of solid wood core construction.
 - b.) Use good quality dead bolt locks on all exterior doors. (Check with your local law enforcement agency for specific data regarding what compromises quality security hardware.)
 - c.) Install a peephole viewer with a minimum 180° viewing angle in the front door to allow you to check who's there. These are inexpensive and easy to install. Don't rely on a chain lock. It is not a security device. Don't automatically open the door to strangers.

ACTION PLAN II

-4-

- d.) Have all exterior locks rekeyed when moving into a new house or apartment. This can be done by a licensed locksmith at little cost.
- e.) Make sure all doors leading from the garage to the house are properly secured. Keep the garage door closed at all times.
- f.) Sliding glass doors are a poor security risk. The locks they come equipped with are usually inadequate. They can be secured by inexpensive key locks, anti-slide blocks, a hole drilled through the overlapping frames and pinned with a nail or screws protruding in the track to prevent the door from being lifted out. (Sliding glass windows can be secured in the same fashion.)
- g.) Use key locks or pin double hung windows. Remove operator handle from awning type windows (keep nearby in case of fire).
- h.) Jalousie doors and windows present a special security problem. They should be replaced if at all possible. If not feasible, these can be secured with heavy gauge mesh or grillwork with a quick release feature from the inside in the event of fire. One window in each bedroom should be left uncovered for quick emergency exit.
- i.) Install adequate exterior lighting at vulnerable entrance points to your home as a deterrent to criminal activity. In apartments, get together with other tenants to demand good lighting around entrances, in hallways, parking areas, courtyards and laundry and game rooms.

- j.) Don't open the door to strangers. Check the identity of the caller through a peephole viewer. Instruct children to tell you when someone is at the door instead of opening the door to strangers.
- k.) Request identification from all repair or maintenance personnel. Check the credentials by calling the company's phone number listed in the book, the building manager or the police. Don't use the phone number the repair person may give to check their credentials. If in doubt don't allow them into your home.
- l.) Be alert to suspicious phone calls. Do not divulge personal information to strangers over the phone such as when someone is home, who is at home, etc. Instruct children to do the same.
- m.) Don't advertise that you live alone. List last name and first initial only on mailboxes, doorbells and in the telephone directory. Consider adding "dummy" names to the mailbox so it appears that you have roommates.
- n.) Keep lights on in more than one room (and perhaps a radio) so it seems that you're not alone. While away make your dwelling look and sound occupied.
- o.) Don't hide an extra key outside. Rapists and burglars know where to find them.
- p.) Keep your doors locked - even when gone momentarily (back yard, pool, neighbors, store). Remember that rapists are opportunists and they take advantage of such situations.
- q.) Don't leave underwear or bathing suits out on the line, balcony or clothes rack at night. This could attract a rapist or "peeping tom".

r.) Be leary of neighbors or casual acquaintances who make a habit of "dropping in" when no one else is at home.

2.) On The Street

a.) The rapist is looking for a woman who appears vulnerable - one who apparently is not aware of her surroundings, daydreaming or who looks frightened and unsure of herself. So keep alert and walk with a purpose. But it must also be brought out that there exists a fine subjective line between presenting an air of confidence and what the potential rapist may perceive as "cockiness". This is an area where your individual common sense must enter in. The woman who displays what the rapist may perceive as "cockiness" may make him feel that it is necessary to bring the woman down off her pedestal, down to his level. The thing to remember is to display enough concern with yourself to unpretentiously exude the feeling that you are no easy target.

b.) If being harassed from a vehicle, turn around and walk in the opposite direction. Try to head for lights and people. The vehicle will have to turn around.

c.) Don't stop to give directions to a driver or a pedestrian. You could be pulled into a car or an alley. If you feel you must give directions, maintain a safe enough distance so you can't be grabbed.

d.) If you are being followed, head immediately for an area where there are lights and people. Do not go home.

- e.) It is extremely dangerous to hitchhike or accept a ride from a stranger. Some rapists use this as their method of operation. Once in a car, you have no control over the situation.
 - f.) If you know you will be doing some walking, it makes good sense to attempt to dress for freedom of movement in clothing and footwear.
- 3.) In Your Car
- a.) Whenever possible, park in well lit areas.
 - b.) Always lock your car.
 - c.) Always have your car keys in hand when leaving home or work.
 - d.) Make it a habit to check the floor of the back seat before getting in your car.
 - e.) If working late, attempt to have a friend from the office accompany you to your car.
 - f.) When driving keep all doors locked.
 - g.) If you think you are being followed, drive to the nearest gas station, fire or police station or well lit area for assistance. Do not drive home.
 - h.) If you have car trouble on the road, raise the hood and wait inside the locked car. If a motorist offers help roll down the window slightly and ask them to call the police.
 - i.) If you want to help a disabled vehicle, drive to the nearest well lit area with a phone and call the police. Don't get out of your vehicle to help someone.
 - j.) Don't pick up hitchhikers under any circumstances.
 - k.) Don't pull over for flashing headlights. If it is the police or other emergency vehicles they will have flashing blue and/or red lights on the top of the car.

4.) General Safety Precautions

- a.) Be honest with your friend or acquaintance. When you mean "no" be sure your voice, "body language" and other non-verbal actions or postures accurately reflect your intentions and you are not sending out conflicting messages. If you are saying "no" and your actions are indicating "yes", your companion is more apt to believe the non-verbal communication.
- b.) Be aware that it is very risky to accept an offer of a ride home or a late night snack from someone you've just met.
- c.) Be particularly careful of whom you are with and where you are when under the influence of stimulants or depressants.
- d.) Do not accept offers of help from strangers. (Car disabled in shopping center parking lot. Someone telling you your car tire is flat and offering to change it).
- e.) Avoid empty laundromats or apartment laundry rooms when alone.
- f.) Tape the correct change to each handbag for emergency use in pay phones. Remember to utilize emergency call boxes on expressways and street corners.
- g.) If you travel a lot, consider an inexpensive "privacy lock" for motel rooms. Be sure it can be quickly removed for emergency exit.

E.) ALTERNATIVES IN AN ATTACK SITUATION

1.) Who are you?

The complexity of the problem of sexual assault is such that you will never know exactly how you will handle the situation when actually confronted with the threat of sexual assault. This

will all depend on what the circumstances are, who you perceive your attacker to be and what type of person you are. Since you can't know what the circumstances are or who your attacker will be, it is of the utmost importance to think about who you are and how you would respond to different crisis situations.

Each person is a unique composite of her individual background, personality, convictions and abilities. That's why there are so many varied reactions from victims in a sexual assault situation. Until faced with the problem, you can't be sure what you'll do. But it will be largely determined by your usual way of handling stress or crisis situations and the unique personal socialization process you have grown up with. In other words, your response to this type of situation will probably be deeply rooted in your personal convictions.

- a.) It may be of prime importance to you to come away with the least possible physical injury.
- b.) You may fear the actual rape more than you fear physical injury.
- c.) You may become so angered at the thought of being sexually assaulted that you would opt for the risk of serious injury to the risk of being raped.
- d.) You may be more concerned for the safety of someone else (loved one) in the situation than for yourself.
- e.) The way you react may depend on your physical condition. The list of "ways and whys" of your reaction is infinite. That is why the different alternatives or tactics will be explained to give you some suggestions on how you could best cope with a sexual assault. But first you need to know something about rapists in general.

2.) Who is the Assailant?

The rapist is an emotionally unstable individual who is using you as an object on which to vent his aggression and hostility.

Remember that rape is not perpetrated for sexual gratification.

He wants to degrade and humiliate you. Sometimes he sees women as being on a pedestal and through the sexual assault he feels he is "cutting them down to size."

Attempt to reach him as a human being so that you will seem less of an object to him.

The woman does not provoke the attack. It is his problem with which you are dealing. He may appear normal in every way except for his intent to rape which is his method of expressing hostility, aggression, frustration or insecurity. It is the use of force, not the sex act itself, that seems to relieve the tension within him and satisfy him.

Rapists are opportunists. They look for what they perceive to be vulnerable targets.

All rapists have the potential to be violent. This would be a most important consideration when determining alternatives to choose in any given situation.

Although all women have inalienable rights, the rapist does not acknowledge those rights and has to be dealt with in such a way to enable the woman to safely avert the sexual assault.

3.) Alternative Tactics

a.) Diverting Noise

This is probably a better tactic to use when you have some advance warning of a situation. It is only useful if there is

someone nearby to hear the noise and is willing to come to your aid or frighten off the assailant.

Sometimes screaming "Fire" or "Call the police" (not "Rape" or "Help") or blowing a whistle which you have readily available may frighten away your assailant and call attention to your problem. But, it may antagonize him further. Screaming could make him angrier and he may beat you or strangle you to keep you quiet. You must weigh the odds, depending on the situation, of this tactic being successful.

b.) Running

The risk with this tactic is whether he can and will run faster than you and overpower you. Unless you are reasonably certain you can get a good lead and reach safety before he overtakes you, this may be a risky tactic. Make sure you have a place to run to where someone will help you. Keep in mind that your running from him may be a part of the rapist's fantasy and it may make him angrier should he overtake you.

c.) Gaining a Psychological Advantage

Panic and fear are perfectly normal responses; however, if you have mentally prepared yourself (in advance) by accepting the fact that you could someday find yourself in a rape situation and have thought about what you might do, it may decrease the trauma and allow you to react more quickly in coming to grips with the problem.

This is an intermediate tactic when you need that precious time to get over the initial panic or fear. Survey your predicament so you can begin to defuse your assailant's anger.

This tactic can take many forms - going limp, sinking to the ground and eating grass, hiding your face in order to stick your finger down your throat and cause yourself to vomit, making yourself belch, even urinating on your attacker. You can act as if you are responding to his demands (starting to unbutton your blouse) - until you can find a point to safely react. Your own ingenuity is your best guide. Crying can be worth trying. Doing something he doesn't expect may stop or delay him because the rapist wants to be in control and finds it difficult to cope with something he hadn't anticipated. It is doing the unexpected convincingly, so that he doesn't become more antagonistic. Remember that the rapist is a con-artist so you have to be extremely believable.

Anything that won't threaten or antagonize him while you look for a way to get out of the situation should keep you from being hurt.

d.) Talking

The first few moments you may be too terrified to utter a sound. That's perfectly normal. But if you have thought in advance about the possibility of sexual assault, the shock will not be as great.

The key to this tactic, which can be successful in aborting an attack, is to speak calmly and sincerely as one human being trying to reach out to another human being. You should not beg, plead, cower or make small talk. Many times this is

what your assailant expects to hear and it may antagonize him even further. Use your own ingenuity in what you choose to talk about in this totally unexpected crisis situation. You will probably hit on something in which you are interested, something about which you can talk comfortably. It could range from your pet, a recent movie you've seen, a book you are reading, a recent death in the family. The range is limitless - it is how you handle it that is important. Remember the prime objective in using this tactic is to relate to the assailant on a one to one basis as sincerely as possible. Hopefully, convincing him that you are seeing him as a person instead of some sort of a monster will make him perceive you as a person offering your concern and not as his enemy. You need to make him see that you are not an object on which to vent his anger.

You should make an effort to reduce his range by enhancing his ego. Try to gain a psychological advantage over him. Don't give him a sermon. He may be trying to rape you because he thinks women are too uppity and it would give him great satisfaction to knock a moralizing female down. To his way of thinking, if he can pull you down it raises his self-esteem. That's why it is extremely important to try to reach him in a way which will break his fantasy and allow him to see you as an individual (not an object) with honest feelings and concerns.

If something you are saying is antagonizing him further, switch to another topic.

e.) Fighting

When considering this tactic you must keep in mind that all rapists have the potential for inflicting serious harm - they are all potentially violent. This is probably the last tactic to try if all the

the others have failed. If you start out by fighting you will have little or no opportunity to try any other way because you have already committed your behavior. If using this tactic, you must be willing and able to inflict serious injury on your assailant. Use surprise and speed of reaction to your benefit. If you use a fighting tactic which will not completely incapacitate, you are probably going to be in worse shape. If he has a weapon, always assume that he won't hesitate to use it. (Most studies show that approximately half the number of reported rapists approached their victims with a weapon of some type.) Your risks of receiving serious injury from your assailant are greatly increased when using such tactics as biting, scratching, pounding his chest with your fists, trying to spray mace or hair spray into his eyes or using any other weapon which will not completely incapacitate him.

Even victims with extensive training in martial arts are not always successful with quick chops or kicks to vital spots on the body. The struggle itself could arouse or further enrage your assailant. Remember, surprise and speed of reaction should be used to your benefit. For instance, gently put your hands on his face and get your thumbs near his eyes, then press his eyeballs suddenly with your thumbs as hard as you can. This will put the assailant into shock and could blind him. Or grab his testicle (not his penis, since it will not be effective) squeeze as hard as you can and jerk or pull to inflict immobilizing pain.

Both of these tactics can be accomplished in such a way so that the assailant is not aware of your plans for a physical attack. If used, they must be sure and quick and you must be willing to follow through to insure the disabling injury of the assailant.

The precautions and tactics on the preceding pages are meant to be suggestions and guidelines. The prevention material presented can reduce a woman's chances of being sexually assaulted and through awareness and understanding, increase her chances of avoiding or surviving a sexual assault. There is no universal prescription for avoiding a sexual assault. You will have to decide which tactic will be most likely to be effective depending on the situation, what type of person you are and who you perceive your assailant to be.

F.) POST ATTACK PROCEDURES

- 1.) Your immediate concern will be obtaining proper medical and psychological help. This help is available. To get the help you'll need immediately call the police, whether or not you decide to report or later prosecute. As soon as possible the police officer will take you to your local hospital or rape treatment center. If you do not want to call the police, at least contact a physician or crisis counselor immediately. These persons can offer you some objective professional advice about the situation to help you decide how to proceed. It is also important that "significant" others (husband, family, boyfriends) get counseling so they can better help support you and be more sensitive to your coping with the trauma at hand. Police sensitivity to the trauma of the victim and the investigative procedures to enhance the possibility of conviction of the suspect have improved greatly over the last few years.
- 2.) Even though it may be your initial impulse, DON'T douche, shower, change your clothes or disturb the crime scene. At first, prosecution may be the last thing on your mind, but after your immediate needs have been met you'll probably want to assist the police. So be sure you don't destroy any valuable physical evidence.

- 3.) Most victims feel strongly about wanting to see the offender caught so he will not be able to harm another person. Rapists are repeaters, but records indicate that they also very rarely retaliate against their victims.
- 4.) If you decide to call the police and report the crime, they will ask you some initial questions regarding the identity and location of the suspect, his direction of flight and whether or not he had a weapon. These questions may be asked en route to the hospital.
- 5.) Procedures differ among hospitals. Generally, the victim will be asked her name, date of birth, brief medical history and perhaps some other general questions. You will first be checked and treated for any visible physical injuries. It should be pointed out that any treatment you receive will be strictly at your option. If necessary, a complete internal examination will also be performed by a qualified physician. This is to establish the extent of any injuries as well as collect any specimens should you decide to prosecute. When appropriate, you will be offered medication to prevent venereal disease or pregnancy. No one will force you to take any medication to which you object.
- 6.) Usually, if your physical and mental condition permit, you will be asked to give a formal statement as soon as possible after the medical examination. The police officer will ask only questions which are relevant to the investigation such as: What you did prior to the assault. Who you were with. Where you were going. What your activities were that could have exposed you to the subject. Where the actual assault took place. What the suspect may have touched (such as a bedspread or chair) or left behind. How long the suspect was present. How he left, and other questions along these lines. You will also be asked the details of the assault which will more than likely elicit very painful emotions. These are necessary

to establish all the facts of the case and will only be asked when you feel you are ready to handle them.

- 7.) A suspect identity chart is included to help the reader understand what things to look for and remember in identifying a sexual assault suspect as well as burglars, robbers or any other criminals.
- 8.) Should you decide to pursue the prosecution process, the State Attorney's Office will handle the case. They will prosecute if they feel they have enough evidence for a case. Prosecution is a long and complicated process and may take anywhere from 4-8 months. Remember that you are not on trial - the defendant is. But under the criminal justice system he is assumed innocent until proven guilty. The prosecuting attorney will inform you of what to expect in the trial and may go over certain questions again. The probability of conviction may vary depending on such things as quality of evidence and your testimony. Most sex offenders are repeaters. Your decision to prosecute may save others from suffering.
- 9.) In many areas, help is available for victims with questions or doubts about prosecution from:
 - State Attorney's Office
 - Victim Advocate Programs
 - Victim Witness Liasion
 - Rape Crisis Centers
 - Women's groups
- 10.) Usually the victim who prosecutes for revenge gives up, while the victim who prosecutes to save others sticks with it.
- 11.) In 1974 a progressive Sexual Battery Statute went into effect in Florida. This law encompasses all forms of sexual battery

whether or not penetration occurred. Consequently, the guidelines under which a prosecutor can obtain a conviction have been considerably broadened. The rights of the victim have also been expanded in that certain questions can not be asked of her during the trial unless it has been established by the court (in the absence of the jury) that these are relevant to the issues involved.

ABOVE ALL, REMEMBER THAT THERE IS NO MORE REASON FOR YOU TO FEEL GUILT, SHAME OR EMBARRASSMENT THAN IF YOU HAD BEEN THE VICTIM OF A MUGGING OR OTHER CRIME. YOU WERE THE INNOCENT VICTIM AND THERE ARE A GREAT MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE SENSITIVE TO YOUR NEEDS AND ARE ANXIOUS AND ABLE TO HELP YOU.

WHAT IF YOUR SON HAS BEEN SEXUALLY ASSAULTED?

Almost all that has been written about and for girls and women sexual assault victims applies to young boys who are often sexually assaulted and to men who are occasionally (outside of prisons) sexually assaulted. Boys and men should report the assault to the police and seek medical attention. They, too, should talk to some sympathetic person about their mixed emotions and fears.

*Afterword...
To Families and Friends of Sexual Assault Victims:

It is you who have the most important role in helping the victim of sexual assault in her recovery by giving her the reassurance, love, comfort, and support she needs.

Often people have questions about what is the best way to support a woman or child who has been sexually assaulted. It is best to give her the same kind of support that you would give if she were the victim of any other kind of crisis--if she were injured in a car accident, for example.

Immediate medical attention is extremely important, to find and heal any damage, to prevent venereal disease, to prevent pregnancy if she wishes, and to provide evidence for the trial if she chooses to press charges.

Immediately after the assault she may be in tears, highly emotional - she may be in mild shock, or she may appear calm. She will probably have feelings of anxiety, anger, insecurity, guilt, and fear. She may hate men, have trouble sleeping, lose her appetite, have nightmares, or be depressed. But she is not "permanently damaged" or changed; these are normal responses that will pass with your understanding, care, and your support.

This is probably a painful experience for you as well as for her. You may want to forget that it ever happened and not want to talk about it. But don't try to make her forget. It is important that she be able to talk it out with someone who understands. Whenever she wants to talk, listen. And if she remembers any new information, it should be reported to the police. However, she should not be forced to talk when she doesn't want to. Sometimes a rape victim is afraid to tell her family and friends for fear that they will change toward her.

You or she may think, "What should I have done to prevent it?" or, "If I had done such and such it wouldn't have happened." -but really neither of you did anything wrong. There are no foolproof precautions - women are raped at all times of day and night, in all kinds of dress, and in all places - including their own homes. It is easy to look back and think of what you might have done, but it is impossible to look ahead and predict what will happen. Obviously, if any of you had known what would happen, you would have prevented it.

If anyone accuses her of "asking for it" or "enjoying it," they should know that in spite of the mythical stories in some books and movies, nobody wants to be raped or enjoys it. Rape is not normal sex, not lovemaking, but brutal assault, and rape victims are not participants, but victims of the crime. If anyone tries to make her feel guilty for not having fought harder, they should know that sexual assault

victims are in fear of death, and they should be glad that she's still alive. If you want to take revenge against the rapist on your own, that's perfectly natural. But it won't help her. If you wind up in jail or in the hospital or dead, it won't do her a bit of good. Her well-being is what is most important. What you can do is help her work through her feelings about the rape and help her through the court process, if she decides to prosecute.

If she wants to press charges, that is the most constructive way to direct her anger. It may get the rapist off the street and behind bars and it will give him a police record. Only by more women pressing charges can the justice system be improved. However, if she doesn't feel up to taking it to court, she shouldn't be forced to. Pressing charges involves telling the details of the rape to a room full of strangers and in defending herself against the accusations of the defense attorney; it forces her to re-live the experience, and still there may be no conviction. The decision about pressing charges should be her own. In any case, it is best to give the police all the information and evidence she can. This helps them track down and watch the criminal even if she doesn't take him to court. And if she ever decides to prosecute, this way she will be able to have more evidence. Mates sometimes ask how they should approach women sexually after rape. It is best to be neither too aggressive in sex since this is too much like rape, nor too passive since this could make her feel that she is no longer desirable. It is best to let her know that she is desired but not until she is ready.

The experience of rape can be extremely painful, and a woman may require your understanding and support. The rape experience is a crisis that she must work through and most women do work through this crisis and return to their normal routine. Most women have a great deal of inner strength and your support can help her to regain her feelings of personal strength and self-worth.

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