

TWU Counseling Center

Acquaintance Rape

SOME THINGS MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD KNOW: “Acquaintance Rape” is the act of forcing sex on a date or acquaintance. Sexual contact without consent is defined as “Criminal Sexual Conduct.” Sexual contact, including touching, through force or coercion or with a victim who is helpless or mentally incapacitated is sexual conduct punishable by imprisonment and/or fine.

THE AFTER MATH OF SEXUAL ASSUALT: Rape is a complex and painful experience which requires a combination of legal, medical, psychological, religious, family and personal responses. A sexual assault can disrupt a person’s life in many ways. Common feelings include fear, anxiety, rage, depression, and even guilt. Thoughts can be contradictory and confusing.

Being raped by someone you initially trusted can be especially devastating because you are left with the feeling that you can’t trust your own judgment. Some disturbing feelings and thoughts may not become apparent for days, weeks, months, or even years. Counseling and the support of others have proven very helpful and can hasten your recovery. You need not go through the aftermath of sexual assault alone. The Counseling Center provides individual & group counseling to TWU Students.

SOME FACTS ABOUT ACQUAINTANCE RAPE: Every year, an estimated one woman in eight in college will be raped, although many will not use that word to describe their experience. A recent survey of 6,104 students at thirty-three United States colleges indicated that fifteen percent of the college women surveyed had been raped, according to the strict legal definition. In eighty-five percent of these assaults, the women knew their attacker. Not only college women have been victims of sexual violence: five percent of the men in the study reported having been threatened or forced to have sex.

An acquaintance rape will often not involve the use of weapons. Instead, the acquaintance rapist uses threats, coercion, physical strength, or authority to intimidate or overpower. Victims of acquaintance rape often report that they initially trusted and liked their assailant, not recognizing the assailant’s intent to rape until it was too late to get help.

Frequently, women who have been forced or coerced to have sexual contact do not report the experience to police or authorities. If women do tell someone, they are more likely to confide in a friend or a roommate. Men are even less likely to report forced sexual contact.

There are many reasons acquaintance rape occurs. One is the myth that women say no to sex when they really mean yes. Another is that some people have learned that it is acceptable to use force to take what they want, especially if they believe that they are unlikely to be held accountable for their actions. Finally, many acquaintance rapes are characterized by unclear or unheard communications, differences in expectations, and consumption of alcohol by one or both parties.

In recent years, cultural stereotypes and cultural climate alike have changed. Both men and women are learning that acquaintance rape, just like “stranger rape,” is sexual violence and is intolerable in civilized communities. Both men and women are learning that sexual activity which is not fully consensual by both parties is harmful, degrading to the human spirit, and is against the law.

Only rapists are accountable for acts of sexual violence. However, the following suggestions are offered to help all members of the campus community to understand the scope of the problem and to offer new ways of thinking about some very old issues.

INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

1. Spend time thinking and discussing the role that you want sex to play, if any, in your life right now. If past sexual experiences have been troubling or if you have questions about the role of sex in your life, you may wish to seek out someone to trust (a friend, relative, minister, resident advisor, and counselor) and talk out your thoughts and feelings.
2. Communicate your expectations clearly, while sober and allow your date/partner to do the same.
3. *If you believe that you know just what your date/partner really wants, thinks and feels, even though she/he says the opposite - you are courting disaster.*
4. Both men and women have the same rights to initiate contact and to set limits that will be respected. Building a relationship requires two people working together as equals and mutual agreement as to the role sex will play in their relationship.
5. Both men and women sometimes feel pressure to be sexually active. Think for yourself; as with any serious decision, you are the one who will have to live with the consequences.
6. If you use alcohol, use it in moderation. Alcohol and other drugs decrease inhibitions, lead to impulsive behavior, and interfere with rational thought. In most reported acquaintance rape cases both the man and woman have been drinking.
7. Sexual aggression does happen and can happen to you. If it does, don't keep silent. Talk to someone about what happened. There are people here who care.

INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR WOMEN:

1. You have the right to set and to reset sexual limits. Your body is your own, and nobody has the right to force you to do something you don't want to do.
2. Trust your feelings and thoughts. Sometimes women have a "sense" that something is wrong, yet fail to act on it. If your date makes comments which display hostility toward women, or insists on making all the decisions, or seems extremely jealous or possessive, this person may not be respectful of your right to refuse sex.
3. Communicate your limits. You need not apologize for the limits you set. Be firm! If you try not to hurt feelings by hinting in a nice way, your implied "no" may be ignored. It is okay to be direct and firm with someone who is sexually pressuring you, even if it causes hurt feelings. After all, this person is not attending to your feelings.
4. If you decide you do want to say "No" to your date/partner: ***** MAKE YOUR STATEMENTS SHORT, CLEAR, AND AUDIBLE ***TRY TO MAINTAIN DIRECT EYE CONTACT AND ERECT POSTURE ***USE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND GESTURES TO ADD EMPHASIS**
5. Educate yourself about men and sex. Many women have been taught by men to believe that a man can not control himself sexually once he reaches a "certain point." This is simply not true. Many women have also been raised by fathers who do not allow a daughter to say "no." It is important to learn to say "no" to adult males.
6. Think twice about going to a man's room or apartment. Most date rapes occur on the partner's turf. Be careful about inviting a man into your room or apartment. Some men see this as an invitation to sexual activity.
7. Until you begin to know a person well, try to arrange double dates or schedule the first few dates around public activities such as movies, dinner, concerts, etc.
8. Heavy petting or removing some of your clothing may confuse your date about what you are willing to do sexually. When you send conflicting messages, the situation becomes more difficult for you and your date/partner to control.

INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR MEN:

1. Trust that “no” always means “no.” It is NEVER permissible to force yourself on a partner, even if you believe he/she is leading you on. If your partner says “no”, respect that person's right to control his/her own body. Recognize that you must take responsibility for yours.
2. If you are not absolutely certain that sexual activity is mutually agreed upon, WAIT. Waiting is always an option.
3. If you have sex without your partner's consent, you are committing a crime even if you have had sex with this person previously. Remember, your partner, like you can decide to change his/her mind at any time, and you must respect that decision.
4. Many men in our culture have been taught that the purpose of a date is to “score” or “get laid,” and that they have somehow failed if a date doesn't end in sex. Be alert to such cultural baggage in yourself. It can interfere with your ability to listen and be responsible to your date's limits and wants.
5. A woman who has had sex with others is not asking to have sex with you. A woman who wears what you consider to be provocative or revealing clothing is not asking to be raped.
6. Spending money on a partner does not entitle you to sex. It is insulting to expect sexual favors as a “repayment.”
7. You are committing a criminal sexual assault if you have sex with a person who is intoxicated, under the influence of other drugs, unconscious, or otherwise physically helpless or mentally incapacitated.
8. The consequences for being convicted of criminal sexual conduct are very heavy and long lasting. You can go to prison for a long time, you can be expelled from the University; you can be unable to seek employment for the rest of your life without having to report to your prospective employer that you were convicted of rape.
9. Remember that men also can be victimized sexually. If this should happen to you, the same laws apply and the same help resources are available to you that are available for women who have been victimized.

Stay Aware and Alert! Do not accept drinks from anyone you don't know well or from anyone you don't trust. Do not leave your drink unattended. If you are accepting a drink, make sure it is in an unopened container and that you open it yourself. Do not allow anyone you don't know well to escort you home if you are under the influence of any substance. Call your friends or family and ask them to take you home.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF SEXUAL ASSAULT: If you are threatened with rape by either a stranger or an acquaintance, you will have to use your own best judgment about how to react. Some experts recommend that you make as much noise as possible, but this is helpful only if there are people close by who can and will come to your assistance. Other experts believe that called for help or struggling may simply antagonize or excite a rapist and increase the intent to complete a rape. **PRESERVING YOUR LIFE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL; NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO DURING THE ASSAULT, YOU ARE NOT THE GUILTY PARTY.**

REFERRAL SOURCES:

The TWU Counseling Center provides free and confidential counseling to currently enrolled students. Listed below are the telephone numbers for the Counseling Center and for other important resources.

Resource	Denton	Dallas Parkland	Dallas Presbyterian	Houston
Counseling Center	940-898-3801	214-689-6655	214-706-2416	713-794-2059
Student Life	940-898-3615	214-689-6697	214-689-6697	713-794-2157
TWU DPS	940-898-2911	214-689-6666	214-706-2333	713-794-2222
County Mental Health Center	940-381-5000	214-330-7722	214-330-7722	713-970-7070

This information provided by the Counseling and Consultation Services

at The Northern Michigan University