

# TWU Counseling Center

## Myths about Sexual Harassment

**MYTH:** Sexual harassment is rare.

**FACT:** Sexual harassment is extremely widespread. It touches the lives of 40 to 60 percent of working women, and similar proportions of female students in colleges and universities.

**MYTH:** The seriousness of sexual harassment has been exaggerated; most so-called harassment is really trivial and harmless flirtation.

**FACT:** Sexual harassment can be devastating. Studies indicate that most harassment has nothing to do with "flirtation" or sincere sexual or social interest. Rather, it is offensive, often frightening, and insulting to women. Research shows that women are often forced to leave school or jobs to avoid harassment; some individuals may experience serious psychological and health-related problems.

**MYTH:** Many women make up and report stories of sexual harassment to get back at their employers or others who have angered them.

**FACT:** Research shows that less than one percent of complaints are false. Women rarely file complaints that are false. Women rarely file complaints even when they are justified in doing so.

**MYTH:** Women who are sexually harassed generally provoke harassment by the way they look, dress and behave.

**FACT:** Harassment does not occur because women dress provocatively or initiate sexual activity in the hope of getting promoted and advancing their careers. Studies have found that victims of sexual harassment vary in physical appearance, type of dress, age, and behavior. The only thing they have in common is that over 99% of them are female.

**MYTH:** If you ignore harassment, it will go away.

**FACT:** It will not. Research has shown that simply ignoring the behavior is ineffective; harassers generally will not stop on their own. Ignoring such behavior may even be seen as agreement or encouragement.