

ATVP

Celebrating 25 Years of Survivors' Strength

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24-Hour Hotline

(509) 332-HELP

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Collect Crisis Calls Accepted



A UNITED WAY AGENCY

Understanding Sexual Assault



Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse

Help for victims and survivors of
domestic violence and
sexual assault

24-hour Crisis Hotline

(509) 332-HELP


(208) 883-HELP




What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is a broad term that encompasses a variety of abusive actions. Sexual assault is oppressive and demeaning in nature, and is best described as a sexual expression of aggression, control, and/or power inequality. Sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of race, socio-economic status, sexual preference, age, or gender. Sexual assault can be male on female, male on male, female on female, or female on male. Acts of sexual violence may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- **Stranger Rape:** assailant is unknown to the victim. It frequently involves the use of force and/or threat of physical violence.
- **Non-stranger rape:** where the victim knows the assailant and makes up for 84% of all sexual assaults that occur.
- **Partner/Spouse Rape:** occurs in relationships and is often a part of most domestic violence relationships.



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Rape Myths and Statistics

Myth: Sexual assaults occur in dark alleyways and the perpetrators are strangers to the victim.

Fact: 84% of all sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. 1 in 4 sexual assaults occur in the victim's home. (NWS, 1992)

Myth: You cannot be raped by your husband or boyfriend.

Fact: 1 in 3 sexual assaults are perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner. Sexual assault/abuse is often part of domestic violence. 14% of married women reported that their husbands had used physical force or threats to try to have sex with them. (Randall & Haskin, 1995)

Myth: Men cannot be sexually assaulted.

Fact: Although women are sexually assaulted more frequently, 1 in 6 men will be victimized by sexual assault. 83% of abused boys are under age 12; 26% are under age 6. (Hooper, 1998)

Myth: Children are more likely to be abused by strangers.

Fact: Most children, like most adults, are sexually assaulted by someone they know. 93% of children knew their attacker. (DOJ, 2000)

Myth: If a woman is drinking or doing drugs, and is sexually assaulted, she brought it upon herself.

Fact: No one is asking to be assaulted. No one deserves to be assaulted. Sexual assault is a crime and the perpetrator is the one to blame.

Supporting a Survivor of Sexual Assault

- ⇒ Educate yourself about sexual abuse/rape and the healing process
- ⇒ Believe the victim
- ⇒ Validate the feelings that follow an assault
- ⇒ Seek out support
- ⇒ Be clear that the abuse or rape was not the victim's fault
- ⇒ Respect the time and space it takes to heal
- ⇒ Know that recovery is possible
- ⇒ Call ATVP for support and/or resources

Risk Reduction

- ◇ Make sure there is clear communication within your sexually intimate relationships.
- ◇ Think about your safety when alcohol or drugs are being used.
- ◇ Know the facts about sexual assault.
- ◇ Listen to your partner when they voice that they want to stop or are uncomfortable with the sexual activity that is happening.
- ◇ Listen to and trust your intuition and your “gut feelings”.
- ◇ Know your boundaries and sexual limits.
- ◇ Be respectful and aware of signals or body language that would reflect discomfort.

- **Child Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is threatened, coerced, manipulated, or forced into sexual acts.

More specifically, a sexual assault can be any unwanted, unwelcome, and nonconsensual sexual act of any kind, including jokes, catcalls, obscene phone calls, voyeurism, exhibitionism, sexual photographing, videotaping, forced touching, forced or coerced sexual intercourse, or sexual mutilation.

Common Reactions of Sexual Assault Victims

- Fear
- Mood Swings
- Anxiety
- Tension
- Guilt
- Difficulties in Setting Boundaries
- Feeling Betrayed
- Powerlessness
- Suicide
- Disorientation
- Not Sleeping
- Anger
- Self Harm
- Withdrawal
- Mistrust
- Confusion
- Nausea
- Eating Changes
- Helplessness
- Nightmares
- Defensiveness

