

Myths and Facts about Acquaintance Sexual Assault

MYTH: When a woman dresses in skimpy clothing or in an alluring manner, she is asking to be raped.

FACT: Perpetrators choose victims for their vulnerability, not their sexiness or how they look or act. Rape is not a crime of sexual desire. It is a crime of hostility and violence toward the victim. People often engage in victim blaming. It is a way to preserve the false belief that they will be safe from sexual assault "if only" they do not do what the victim did. However, rape is never the victim's fault. Only the perpetrator chooses to commit sexual assault.

MYTH: It could never happen to me.

FACT: All individuals are potential rape victims: regardless of age, race, class, religion, occupation, sexual orientation, educational background, or physical description. Both males and females can be rape victims. Rape is never the victim's fault.

MYTH: Anyone who gets drunk or takes drugs is partially responsible for being raped.

FACT: Being drunk does not mean a person is asking to be raped. Forcing sexual contact on another person without consent is against the law. Someone who is passed out, unconscious, or incapacitated because of drugs or alcohol is unable to give consent. Sex without consent is sexual assault. Rape is never the victim's fault.

MYTH: Women lie about being raped to protect their reputations, or to get revenge on a guy.

FACT: According to the FBI, the incidence of false reporting is only 2%, the same as for other felonies. Sexual assaults are investigated just like any other crime. It is far more likely that rape is under-reported and in fact, some studies estimate that only 40% of rapes are reported. Rape is never the victim's fault.

MYTH: When someone says that they are not interested in sex, or doesn't respond to their partner's sexual advances, they just need to be persuaded to have sex.

FACT: Sex without consent is sexual assault. A person can withdraw their consent at any time. Not responding to sexual advances is not consent. A "no" in any form, must be respected and listened to. Consent is actual words or conduct indicating a freely given agreement to engage in sexual activity. Rape is never the victim's fault.

MYTH: Once a male is aroused or excited, he has to have sex. He will not be able to stop himself.

FACT: There is a difference between not wanting to stop and not being physically able; people are physically capable of controlling their sexual actions. For example, if two people are

engaged in consensual sexual activity and a roommate walks in the room, they are physically able to (and probably would) stop having sex. Rape is never the victim's fault.

MYTH: Sexual assault is an impulsive, spontaneous act.

FACT: Most rapes are carefully planned by the rapist. A rapist will rape again and again, usually in the same area of town (or within the same college or university) and in the same way.

MYTH: Sexual assault usually occurs between strangers.

FACT: By some estimates, over 70% of rape victims know their attackers. The rapist may be a relative, classmate, friend, co-worker, date or other acquaintance. In college, acquaintance or non-stranger rape accounts for nearly 90% of all completed or attempted rapes on campus.