

SURVIVING RAPE: FACTS & MYTHS

by Susan Bartelstone, Crime Prevention Specialist

Rape is not sex. It's a violent crime that's about power, aggression, hostility, control.

Legally, it's defined as a completed act of sexual violence forcefully performed against the will of another person, including the use of psychological force and coercion, as well as the use of foreign objects.

Sexual Assault is defined as unwanted sexual contact between an unwilling victim and a perpetrator that DOESN'T lead to rape: Fondling, touching, being coerced to sit on someone's lap, being poked or patted in a sexual manner, being kissed or hugged against your will are some examples.

Though different, these terms are often used interchangeably. Legal definitions may vary state by state.



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The Facts (www.rainn.org):

- Every 73 seconds someone in the US is sexually assaulted/raped. One out of every six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime (14.8% completed, 2.8% attempted).
- Victims comprise all ages, genders, sexual orientations, races, religions, socioeconomic classes, cultures and geographic locations. No specific factors predispose a person to victimization.
- There's strong evidence that 63,000 children a year, the majority aged between 12-17, were victims of sexual abuse from 2009-2013.
- Survivors can experience physical and mental symptoms for many years in its aftermath (see **Surviving Rape: The Road to Recovery**).
- No one EVER deserves to be raped, even if they were wearing so-called "provocative" clothing, were out alone late at night, or used bad judgment and left themselves vulnerable.

No one deserves to be raped or abused ever! Don't blame the victim, no matter the circumstances of the crime. The fault ALWAYS lies with the rapist.

The Myths:

- **Myth:** Most rapes are committed by strangers upon someone who was in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Fact: Friends or acquaintances of the victims commit approximately 80% of rapes and sexual assaults. Strangers were responsible for approximately 1 in 5 rapes. Nearly 6 out of 10 rapes occurred at the victim's home or the home of a friend, relative or neighbor.
- **Myth:** If s/he didn't fight back it wasn't really rape.
Fact: Any sexual act forced upon another person is considered rape. Submitting, with or without resistance, doesn't change anything. Many times, the person is too traumatized or immobilized with fear to resist.
- **Myth:** If a victim asks the rapist to wear a condom it means s/he consented to the rape.
Fact: Submitting to a rape, under any circumstances, does NOT = consent. Asking a rapist to wear a condom so the victim won't have to live with the fear of AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases does not mean consent. It means survival.

******National Sexual Assault Hotline, RAINN @ 1-800-656-4673******

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month



✓ **Take a self defense course!**

* [National Center for Victims of Crime](#)

The word "he" when referring to a rapist is used solely for expediency. They can be women as well as men, and teens as well as adults.

The word "she: when referring to rape victims is used solely for expediency and because statistically, women account for the majority of rape victims (91%). But victims may be any gender, age or sexual orientation. Any advice would be basically the same for any victim.

* [National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#)

No absolutes exist in crime scenarios and no advice can address every variable. Evaluate each situation individually and only respond in the way you judge will ensure your safety or survival. Sometimes nothing can be done to prevent an undesirable outcome.

* **SAAM:** <https://www.nsvrc.org/saam>

Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) designates April as the month to acknowledge the prevalence of rape and sexual assault nationwide. It highlights sexual violence as a public health, human rights and social justice issue. It also commemorates its survivors and reinforces the continuing need for prevention efforts. Commit to ending the violence within our homes, our communities, and where ever else our voices reach. Let's make April meaningful and remember it all 12 months.

■ **Myth:** If a person was really raped, s/he would've reported it immediately.

Fact: Sadly, only a small percentage of rapes are ever reported to the police. Reasons for this are numerous and include fear of being blamed, self-blame, fear of reprisals by the rapist and post-rape trauma.

■ **Myth:** Many women "cry rape" to get back at a man for something else he did (like breaking up with them, for example).

Fact: According to the FBI, less than 2% of rapes are falsely reported.

■ **Myth:** Husbands can't rape their wives. Sex is a wife's duty.

Fact: Being married doesn't mean a spouse (or partner) can obligate or force sex upon their mate without consent. Marital Rape is against the law in all 50 states, though legal definitions vary by state.

If you've been a victim of rape or sexual assault, you're NEVER going to forget what happened to you, but you can learn to put it into perspective and get on with your life. For some options towards that goal, see the tip sheet **Surviving Rape: The Road to Recovery** (www.crimeprevention101.com/safetytips).

*Planning in advance prepares you to think and act quickly despite fear, so make Safety Plans for at least five areas in your life that cause you concern. For pointers, see the eBook **Make a Safety Plan** @www.crimeprevention101.com/safetystore.*

More Resources:

✓ Safe Helpline: <https://safehelpline.org/>

✓ Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, US Department of Defense, <https://www.sapr.mil/saapm>

✓ National Center for Victims of Crime, <http://www.ncvc.org>

✓ National Suicide Helpline: 800-273-TALK (run by the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline, <http://www.loveisrespect.org>, 1-866-331-9474)

✓ Hope for Healing, www.hopeforhealing.org (also on Facebook)

✓ Organizations that supply comfort and therapy animals: <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=emotional+support+animals&atb=v204-1&ia=news>

****Keep a journal. It'll help you process your thoughts and show your healing progress. You might want to check out the eBook *The Road to Recovery Healing Journal* @ www.crimeprevention101.com/SafetyStore.**