



Sexual Assault – Any forced sexual activity without someone’s consent.

True consent – When there is a mutual desire for sexual interaction and both participants have the ability to fully understand and appreciate the consequences of that activity.

Myth: The primary motive for sexual assault is sexual.

Fact: The major motive for sexual assault is power – to overpower and control another person. 3 out of 5 offenders are in consenting sexual relationships. Sexual assault is NOT about sex. It is using sex as a weapon. This myth allows us to shift the blame for the sexual assault to the victim and not the offender.

Myth: Sexual assault is an impulsive act and it’s typically because someone led another person on or was a tease.

Fact: Seventy-one percent (71%) of all sexual assaults are planned. The offender intends to sexually assault someone or a specific someone. They often take advantage of a person who is in a vulnerable situation (under age, in love, passed out, high, or drunk, etc).

Myth: Sexual assault is provoked by the victim.

Fact: This mistaken belief holds that people “ask” to be sexually assaulted through their actions or dress, therefore blaming the victim. It also perpetuates the idea that sexual assault is about arousal or attraction, when it’s really about power and control. In fact, studies demonstrate that most sexual assaults are planned in advance, making the survivor’s behavior or attire at the time of the sexual assault irrelevant. It is outrageous to believe that someone would ask for or enjoy a physical attack during which they risk contracting STD’s, pregnancy, injury, or death.

Myth: Sexual assault occurs only among strangers.

Fact: About 75-80% of all sexual assaults involve romantic partners, acquaintances, friends or family. The statistic is even higher when the victim is a juvenile (they know the perpetrator 93% of the time). A person is less likely to report sexual assault by a friend or a relative.

All statistics pulled from www.RAINN.org, the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report, or the National Crime Victim Survey

Myth: Anyone can prevent sexual assault if they really want to.

Fact: This myth asserts that no one can be forced to have sex. In fact, since nearly 90% of all sexual assaults involve threats of physical harm or the actual use of physical force, it follows that a person might submit to a sexual assault to prevent more severe bodily injury or death.

Myth: Offenders are “perverts.”

Fact: This myth assumes that only “sick” or “insane” people are offenders and, again, that obtaining sex is the primary motive for sexual assault. Believing this myth may cause us to expect the offender to be a marked person with particular characteristics. If the accused appears and acts normal, we will not believe that they could have committed the crime.

Myth: Women frequently make false accusations of sexual assault.

Fact: This myth asserts that there is a high rate of false reporting in sexual assault cases. In fact, only about 2-4% of sexual assaults turn out to be false reports, which is the same false report rate for other felonies. Survivors who are aware that many other people believe this myth may be afraid to report and may hesitate to tell anyone for fear that no one will believe them. So, believing this myth not only allows criminals to get away with their behavior, it may prevent survivors from getting help.

Myth: It can’t happen to me.

Fact: Anyone may be sexually assaulted. Studies show that victims include six-month old babies to ninety-nine year olds, people of color, lesbians/gays, people with disabilities, and persons from every racial, ethnic, religious, economic, and social background. According to RAINN, a sexual assault occurs in this country once every 2.5 minutes. Approximately 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. Unfortunately, 60% will go unreported because victims may feel no one will believe them, that it is their fault, or they are fearful of retaliation.

Myth: Most sexual assault offenders are part of a minority group.

Fact: Over 90% of all sexual assaults occur between people of the same race or ethnic background.

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