



## Types of Sexual Assault

Crimes that involve forced or unwanted sexual conduct are considered to be sexual assaults and can include:

- Acquaintance Rape/Non-Stranger Rape
- Stranger Rape
- Drug/Alcohol Facilitated Sexual Assault
- Forced Sodomy (Oral or Anal)
- Gang Rape/Multiple Rape
- Marital Rape or Marital Sexual Assault
- Object Penetration
- Same Sex Sexual Assault

It is common for victims of sexual assaults to question whether they were victimized and/or whether they are responsible for the event or the opportunity for its occurrence.

Because you may not have resisted verbally or physically, does not mean that you were not assaulted. A choice not to physically resist is often made as a means to avoid escalating the attacker's violence. Surviving the event may require you to refrain from saying "No". Use of a weapon or a threat against your friends or family could also be reasons that make it un-safe to resist.

A question that often surfaces for victims who know or are familiar with the attacker is whether the event is still considered a sexual assault. Sexual assault occurs any time the sexual event is not consensual.

Inability to remember the assault does not mean it didn't occur. Although this may make prosecution difficult or not possible, reporting the incident to law enforcement is welcomed and encouraged.

Many times alcohol and/or drugs are used as an excuse or explanation for the assault. Being unconscious or asleep during the assault may cause doubt about the event. The key is to consider the fact that in these states of mind providing consent is not possible and if you did not give consent, it is sexual assault.

## Time and Patience

Recognize that healing from sexual assault takes time. Give yourself the time you need. Many different reactions are understandable and do not mean that you are "going crazy."

You may also find your-self reliving the incident, trying to find an alternative response or different outcome. You may see these possibilities in retrospect (now that the immediate danger has passed), but do not forget the reality of what happened. During the assault you were powerless and in a state of fear.

Always remember you are not to blame and that your actions were understandable given the potentially life-threatening circumstances of the assault.

## Common Reactions

- Inability to concentrate/function at a usual level
- Changes in appetite
- Nightmares
- Loss of self-confidence
- Stress related illness
- Feelings of grief/despair/helplessness
- Anxiety and mood swings
- Sleeplessness
- Fear of being alone, with people, or in a specific setting, especially at night
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Denial of the assault
- Flashbacks
- Embarrassment
- Distrust towards others

These reactions may occur immediately after the event or come to the surface at a later time days, weeks, or months later. You may feel that you are overreacting to normal everyday circumstances and concerns. You may also feel that you are not reacting enough. You may experience one, a few, or several of these reactions.

These responses will likely subside with time. However, if reactions are especially troubling or long lasting, you may consider turning to a helping professional for assistance.

*"What happened to you was  
NOT your fault"*

It's important to remember that a variety of reactions after a traumatic experience can occur. Some of the normal reactions and thoughts you may experience can include:

- **Anger:** I want to kill him/her.
- **Anxiety:** I'm having panic attacks. I can't breathe. I can't stop shaking. I can't sit still. I feel edgy and overwhelmed.
- **Denial:** It wasn't really a "rape".
- **Depression:** How am I going to get through this? I'm so tired. I feel so helpless. I might be better off dead.
- **Disbelief:** Did it really happen? Why Me? Maybe I just made it up.
- **Disorientation:** I don't know what day it is, or where I'm supposed to be. I keep forgetting things.
- **Embarrassment:** What will people think? I can't tell my family or friends.
- **Emotional Shock:** I feel so numb. Why am I so calm? Why can't I cry?
- **Fear:** I'm scared of everything. What if I am pregnant? Could I get an STD or even AIDS? How can I ever feel safe again? Do people know there is anything wrong? I can't sleep because I know I'll have nightmares. I am afraid I am going crazy.
- **Guilt:** I feel as if it's my fault, or did something to make this happen. If only I had...
- **Powerlessness:** Will I ever feel in control again?
- **Sexual relationships suffer:** I can't stand to be touched. Having sex reminds me of the assault. I don't trust my partner not to hurt me. My partner will leave me if I don't have sex with them.
- **Shame:** I feel so dirty, like there is something wrong with me. I want to wash my hands or shower all the time.
- **Triggers:** I keep having flashbacks. I smelled or saw something that reminded me of the assault. I'm still reliving it. I see their face all the time.