Acquaintance Rape and Rape Myths

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SASH CLUB | Students Against Sexual Harassment

Content Warning

SASH Club Power Topics may include sensitive content that may be difficult to present and may possibly be triggering to some participants.

You may want to seek the support of an ally during this presentation, especially if you're a survivor of sexual violence.

What's Ahead:

- Understanding consent
- About acquaintance rape
- Rape myths and facts
- What can I do if I am sexually assaulted?
- What can I do if I experience or witness sexual harassment?

Definitions

Sexual harassment	Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature
Sexual battery/ indecent assault	Unwanted touching of intimate parts, not just sexual organs, outside or inside the clothing (depending on the state)
Sexual assault	Unwanted sexual touching inside clothing
Rape The most extreme form of sexual assault	Rape definitions vary by state but typically include: • Unwanted vaginal or anal penetration with any body part or foreign object • Oral penetration by a sex organ of another person

Understanding Consent

- You must give and receive consent before any type of physical intimacy begins.
- Absence of consent is what determines if the contact is unwanted.
- **Consent must be freely given, not coerced, enthusiastic, not reluctant, and is reversible.**
  - Consent can be reversed or withdrawn at any time.
  - Consent is NEVER given by someone who is asleep or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- See the SASH Club Power Topics Presentation **"Boundaries and Consent"** for more information.

About Acquaintance Rape

- **Acquaintance rape** – Any rape committed by someone who knows the victim.
- **No relationship excuses rape.** A rapist can be a family member, neighbor, friend, classmate, teacher, coach, boss, community or religious leader, date, significant other, or even spouse.

If there is no consent, it's rape. Period.

How Common is Acquaintance Rape and Who is Most at Risk?

18

Those under 18 are the most vulnerable to acquaintance rape.

- Across all ages, **70%** of rape and sexual assault victims know their attacker prior to the assault.
- **Over 80%** of sexual assaults on college campuses are committed by someone the victim knows.
- Victims of rape who are **under age 18** know their offender prior to the incident 90% of the time.

The Impact of Acquaintance Rape on Survivors

- Is it any less traumatizing to be raped by an acquaintance than a stranger? It is not less traumatizing; it is still rape.
- Acquaintance rape can trigger PTSD, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, chronic pain conditions, addictions, thoughts of self harm, and a host of other problems just like rape by a stranger.
  - This betrayal of trust by an acquaintance can cause additional long-lasting emotional injuries.
  - Survivors may classify their experience as something other than rape and therefore be less inclined to seek help.

It is a rape myth to assume that rape by an acquaintance is less harmful than rape by a stranger.

Talk About It

- How well do you think most teens understand the importance of giving and receiving consent?
- Are you surprised that 90% of rape survivors under the age of 18 know their offender? Why or why not?
- How many movies or TV shows have you seen that portray rape by a stranger in a dark alley vs. by an acquaintance? How does this compare to real life statistics?
- What societal factors might contribute to acquaintance rape?

Rape Myths Defined

- Rape myths are false beliefs people hold about sexual assault that shift blame from the perpetrator to the survivor.
- These false statements not only shame survivors into silence, they also contribute to a culture that misunderstands and minimizes sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.
- Using rape myths is also called “victim blaming,” and is unfortunately very common in our society.

Rape Myths

If a rape survivor did not fight back or cry for help, it
been rape. After a rape, the survivor will be hysterical and crying
Wearing revealing clothing, behaving provocatively or drinking a lot mean
the victim was "asking for it." A lot of victims lie about being raped or "cr
rape." Rape is an act of lust and passion that is not controlled. If you had n
been drinking/high, only women get raped
Serial rapists are physically aroused
during a rape, they must have enjoyed it, so it wasn't really rape. If a rap
really happened, the survivor will report it to the police right awa
If a person was physically aroused during a rape, they must hav
enjoyed it, so it wasn't really rape. Rape is an act of lust and passion

MYTH

If a rape survivor did not fight back or cry for help, it must not have been rape.

FACT

- Many survivors experience a “freeze response” during an assault where they physically cannot move or speak. You may want to watch **“Fight or Freeze. I just Froze” video.**
- Threats, fear, shock, or the size and strength of the attacker may also discourage a victim from fighting. They may think fighting back will cause the attacker to become more violent.
- Victims may try to talk the perpetrator into stopping, especially if it is an acquaintance.
- The fear that someone else will see or hear what is happening could cause a victim to stay silent.
- Whether or not someone physically fought their attacker does not determine whether it was rape.

MYTH

After a rape, the survivor will be hysterical and crying.

FACT

- Everyone responds differently to trauma – some may cry, some may laugh, and others may be in shock and unable to show any emotion at all.
- There is no correct or incorrect way to react to trauma.
- Whether or not someone is hysterical or crying does not determine whether it was rape.

MYTH

Wearing revealing clothing, behaving provocatively, or drinking a lot means the victim was "asking for it."

FACT

No one asks for rape.
No one ever causes someone to commit a crime against them.

MYTH

A lot of victims lie about being raped or "cry rape."

FACT

- Multiple studies conclude only 2-8% of rape accusations are false, the same percentage as false reports for other felonies.
- It is much more common for a rape survivor to stay silent and not report the crime to anyone than to falsely report a rape.
- Yet 60% of men and 51% of women believe that false accusations of sexual assault against men are "very common."

MYTH

Rape is an act of lust and passion that can't be controlled.

FACT

- Rape is about power, control and in licting violence and humiliation; rape is not motivated by sexual grati ication.
- Many rapists will intentionally choose someone they perceive to be vulnerable: someone smaller, weaker, isolated, or trusting.
- Learn more in **Sexual Harassment and Assault Happen to Males Too.**

MYTH

If you hadn't been drinking/high, you wouldn't have been raped.

FACT

- Alcohol and drugs are weapons that some perpetrators use to control their victim and render them helpless.
- An assailant may encourage the victim to use alcohol/drugs, or may target an individual who is already drunk/high or even asleep.
- Alcohol and drugs (and sleep) are not causes of rape; they are tools perpetrators may use to commit a crime.
- See the **"Alcohol and Date Rape Drugs"** SASH Club Power Topics presentation for more information.

MYTH

Only women get raped.

FACT

- Males can be, and are, sexually assaulted. Sexual assault of males is thought to be greatly underreported. Any male can be sexually assaulted regardless of size, strength, sexual orientation, or appearance.
- LGBTQ+ people experience sexual violence at higher rates than their non-LGBTQ+ peers. LGBTQ+ survivors often receive less support than their peers because of discrimination and misunderstanding of their experiences.
- Learn more in **Sexual Harassment and Assault Happen to Males Too** Power Topic.

MYTH

Serial rapists are uncommon.

FACT

- Most rapes are perpetrated by serial rapists.
- Rapists choose coercion, violence, threats, or deception to assault people on a repeated basis.
- It is rare for a person to only commit rape once.

MYTH

If a person was physically aroused during a rape, they must have enjoyed it, so it wasn't really rape.

FACT

Physical biological arousal reactions are not an indication of consensual activity but are often used to shame and silence survivors.

MYTH

If a rape really happened, the survivor will report it to the police right away.

FACT

- Rape is one of the most underreported crimes in our society. 50-90% of rapes go unreported.
- Many survivors do not report out of shame, fear of being blamed, concern for not being believed, and/or fear of retaliation.
- About half of criminal cases will bring a conviction, but because of low reporting, the sad fact is that only 6% of rapists will ever spend a day in jail. Fifteen of every 16 rapists walk free.

Talk About It

- What rape myths have you heard, seen portrayed in media, or seen played out in publicized trials? Think about movies, television, and song lyrics.
- What rape myths do you think are most common and why?
- Think about the reasons a survivor would keep silent. Is there anything we can do to increase reporting so the perpetrators are held accountable?

Do More:

- A society that believes rape myths creates a “rape culture.” How can we change this culture?
- How can we share what we have learned about acquaintance rape and rape myths with our school/organization and community?
- Can everyone in the room share one thing they learned today and one thing they will commit to doing to move forward?

Learn More

- About acquaintance rape:
  - Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault: When the Rapist is Someone You Know
  - Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault: Acquaintance Rape
- About rape myths:
  - University of Richmond Center for Awareness, Response, and Education (CARE): Rape Myths
  - Resilience (formerly Rape Victim Advocates): Sexual Violence Myths & Facts
  - Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence: Sexual Violence Myths & Misconceptions

Sources & Acknowledgments

- Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault: When the Rapist is Someone You Know
- Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault: Acquaintance Rape
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics
- University of Richmond Center for Awareness, Response, and Education (CARE): Rape Myths
- Resilience (formerly Rape Victim Advocates): Sexual Violence Myths & Facts
- Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence: Sexual Violence Myths & Misconceptions
- Bureau of Justice Statistics: Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey
- The Making a Difference (MAD) Project
- “Ipsos/NPR Examine Views on Sexual Harassment and Assault” - NPR/Ipsos Study of 1,006 U.S. adults conducted October 23-24, 2018

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted

- Get away from the attacker to a safe place as fast as you can.
- Then call 911 or the police.
- Call a friend or family member you trust.
- You can call a crisis center or hotline to talk with a counselor.
- One 24/7 option, for all genders, is the Rape, Abuse & Incest National
- Network (RAINN) National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE(4673).
- RAINN will connect you with a rape crisis center in your area.
- Visit the Survivor Support page for more helpline options and details.

To Do Immediately if Sexually Assaulted

- **Preserve the evidence, even if you are unsure you will report.**
- **Do not:**
  - Wash, comb your hair, or clean any part of your body
  - Brush your teeth
  - Change clothes, if possible, so the hospital nurse can collect evidence
  - Touch or change anything at the scene of the assault
- **Seek medical attention ASAP at your nearest hospital ER:**
  - You need to be examined, treated for any injuries, checked for possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy, and can receive preventative medicine.
  - The nurse or doctor will collect evidence the attacker may have left behind.
- **Ask hospital staff to connect you with a local rape crisis center**

If You are Sexually Harassed

It isn't your fault... and you can get help to make it stop.

- Reach out ASAP to a friend, school counselor or trusted adult for immediate safety & support to bring the issue to your Dean of Students, Principal, or Title IX Coordinator.
- Confidential National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
  www.rainn.org
- Learn about your rights and how to take action on the Stop Sexual Assault in Schools website

Feedback & Suggestions:

SASH Club welcomes your feedback and suggestions on the content of this presentation. Contact us via:

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- Contact an adult advisor with your questions or concerns about local issues.

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