

Sexual Assault Risk Reduction Tips

The following tips are intended to assist you in reducing your risk of being a victim or perpetrator of sexual assault. Unfortunately, there are no guaranteed strategies in the prevention of sexual assault. However, there are several tips which may be helpful in reducing your risk for acquaintance rape or other sexual assault involvement.

While anyone can sexually assault another person, male or female, be aware that most sexual assaults are perpetrated by men, and most victims are women. Use your knowledge to raise awareness among potential perpetrators and end sexual assault.

Self Assessment

- Think about what you really want, emotionally and sexually, from or with the other person.
- Beware of stereotypes which prevent you from acting as you want to (such as a woman not being able to initiate, or a man not being able to say "no").

Personal

- Feel good about yourself, and if you do not - get yourself involved in activities and with people who will make you feel better.
- Those who were victims of abuse as children are more likely to be victims or perpetrators of sexual assault in adulthood. Consider seeking professional care if you are a survivor of childhood abuse.
- Eliminate completely or limit your alcohol and other drug consumption. Most acquaintance rapes happen when one or both people are intoxicated or high.

Communication

- After determining what you want, communicate your needs and set clear limits for acceptable behavior (such as "Would you like to have sex?" or "No touching below the waist.").

Assertiveness

- Believe and act as if your needs are important, without exploiting others.

Interpersonal

- Pay attention to nonverbal cues.
- Listen to what the other person is saying, and pay attention to the words. For example, if you hear "no" or "stop," then immediately end any sexual interactions.
- Treat each other as equals, and expect to be treated in a respectful manner.

Awareness

- Observe how the environment around you is changing (such as your being left at a party by your friends when you do not know how you will get home).

Know Your Rights

- You have the right to determine what type of interactions you will have with another person.
- You have the right to end sexual activity at any point, regardless of how far sexual intimacy has gone.
- You have the right to fulfill your sexual needs without violating another person's rights. Masturbation, for example, is a means to fulfill your sexual desires.

Know Which Behaviors Constitute Sexual Assault

- It is a crime to have sex with someone who is passed out due to drug or alcohol use and is unable to express consent.
- It is a crime to force another person to have unwanted sexual contact.

To Reduce Your Risk of Becoming a Victim...

Observe Your Feelings and Behavior

- Trust your own instincts at all times. If you feel uneasy, there is a reason for it. Listen to the voice inside you and act on it.
- Ask yourself: "Am I able to say no if I am uncomfortable with what is happening?"

Observe the Behavior of Those Around You

- Be aware when others attempt to violate your personal space.
- Do not assume that someone who has been nonviolent in the past will be nonviolent in the future.

Communicate Your Feelings and Needs

- Before you find yourself alone with a date, clarify your intentions with each other.
- Men who consciously or subconsciously believe in the myth of endless female sexual desire (i.e. girls really want it even when they say no) are dangerous. Behaving passively or submissively can foster that myth. Always be direct and assertive in all communications throughout an evening, from what you choose to eat at dinner to what you are interested in sexually.
- Be verbally assertive. Assertive responses are direct, honest, appropriate and spontaneous. Speak in calm, controlled manner while looking directly at the harasser. Examples include, "I don't want you to touch me like that. I want you to stop now."
- Be physically assertive. Do not "shrink" physically. Look confident and competent. It's important that your words and actions be consistent.
- Be prepared for men to react to assertiveness. Oftentimes, men are not prepared for women to demand respect and do not know how to deal with it. Some men may react

nastily, others may be sheepish and shrink away, while some may critically examine their behavior for the first time, and move toward change.

Use Your Power to be in Control

- Maintain your boundaries and rules of conduct at all times, regardless of how well you know someone.
- If you feel uncomfortable, threatened, or do not like how you are being treated emotionally or physically, then leave the situation immediately. Emotional abuse escalates to physical abuse.
- Be aware of the amount of alcohol consumed by you or by an acquaintance. Sexual assaults are more likely to occur after one or both individuals have consumed alcohol.
- Be aware of your environment and escape routes within your environment.
- Be prepared to provide yourself with the means of leaving a dangerous situation. Have a back-up plan in place, including access to a phone, cab fare, a friend with a car, Campus Escort Service, etc.
- Because there is an unfortunate desire by some in our society to resist intervening in an abusive situation -- particularly when the conflict involves a couple -- yell "Fire!" rather than "Rape!" or "Help!" if you need help in getting out of a dangerous situation.
- Do not give out personal information. Many times, women are asked to disclose a lot of personal information; i.e., their name, residence, place of employment, etc.
- Always ask a repair or delivery person for identification before opening the door.
- Rely on your own resources. Maximize and develop your strength, power, and control. Take self defense classes and be prepared to protect yourself.

Observe Your Behavior

- If you find yourself being manipulative towards others, emotionally or sexually, STOP. Do not exploit others.
- Do not feel as if you always have to initiate sexual contact. Do not initiate if you do not want to.
- Sustain your integrity. Take responsibility for your behavior.

For more information on sexual assault prevention and educational presentations, contact the BGSU Wellness Connection at 419-372-9355.

If you are a victim/survivor of a sexual assault, contact Victim Services of Behavioral Connections by calling The Link at 419-352-1545 or 1-800-472-9411 for emotional support and information 24 hours a day. It is free and confidential.