

What Shall I Do Now That I Have Been Raped?

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Abstract

We take for granted that people know what to do when they are raped. However rape survivors are clueless as to what actions they should take once they have been sexually assaulted. Statistically speaking, one out of every five women is likely to be raped in the United States. Rape cases are reported every five minutes. Many rape cases go unreported because the victims feel like they are the blame and are afraid that society will look down on them. Rape is very prevalent on college campuses all over America. This article is designed to highlight, in a brief format, what a person can do once they have been raped.

“Words seemed to make it visible.
But speaking, even when it embarrassed me,
Also, slowly free me from the shame I felt.
The more I struggled to speak, the less power
the rape, and its aftermath, seemed to have over me”.

Nancy Raine, *After Silence: Rape and My Journey Back*, 1998 [1]

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Introduction

African proverb: “The ax forgets, the tree remembers”.

Rape is not an easy subject to speak about. Far too often it gets pushed under rug. Many people are of the mindset that if you talk about rape you are speaking it into existence. We all know that people have been raped since the beginning of creation. Even the Bible speaks about rape. Historically, when rape was talked about, it was usually glossed over and not given the proper attention. Fortunately, we live in a society where there are many organizations in place to assist the survivors. Through media, information is readily assessable concerning rape. Many survivors still are unsure of what actions they need to take when they are raped or have been sexually assaulted.

Before we move any farther, let’s define rape. The legal definition of rape varies depending on the state you are located. Ideally, rape is defined as forced or nonconsensual sexual intercourse. Rape is any form of sexual activity that a person does not agree to, ranging from touching to penetration. Rape is a crime even if you know the person who assaulted you- it can be your spouse, another family member, a friend, or someone you work with. Rape is a crime whether the victim fought or not, the victim was drinking, drugged or unconscious. The key words are forced and nonconsensual. Rape typically occurs behind closed doors, making it very difficult to prove “beyond a reason-

able doubt” that there was actually no consent, which is required by law. No, means no, at any point. Rape can happen to anyone – men, women, children, and the elderly, regardless of your sexual orientation.

Rape is very prevalent on college campuses in the United States. Rape occurs regardless of the type of college- private, public, ivy-league, rural, urban, predominately White or historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Over the last few years, several incidents of rape that occurred at major universities have made headlines and been brought to trial. One incident involves an ex-student, Brock Turner, who was found guilty on three felony counts of sexual assault. Brock Turner was accused of sexually assaulting an unconscious woman on Stanford University’s campus. The victim was not even aware that she had been raped until the police informed her. Two strangers riding bikes intervened when they discovered Brock Turner on an unconscious woman. Witnesses contacted the police while the bike riders pinned Turner down and his victim was lying passed out by the dumpster. Another incident involved one of Baylor’s football players, Sam Ukwauachu. He raped his victim while she screamed “stop” and “no”. Also, three former Vanderbilt University football players were accused of sexually assaulting an unconscious girl on their campus along with another football player who actually gave the girl to them. Surveillance footage showed the accused men carrying the victim while she was unconscious. The footage of this incident was revealed while the university was investigating vandalism. The victim in this case also was not aware that she had been raped until she saw the video. Given that many of the rape cases on college campuses go unreported, we honestly cannot say or give an accurate account of how many cases there really are. Women on college campuses struggle with the fear they are not going to be believed or they are really not sure even if what they have experienced actually constituted rape or sexual assault. College students also worry about what their family, friends, and others will think about them for filing a rape report; particularly when it involves star athletes at the university or a popular and well-known individual.

Under the gender equity law Title IX, any school receiving federal funding has to investigate reports of sexual assault. Courts hold universities accountable and they must address sexual harassment. Assault is one of the most extreme forms of harassment under the Civil Rights Laws. Under President Obama’s administration, Title IX investigations became more aggressive, resulting in the reformation of school policies and the reporting procedures of sexual violence. The Title IX policy allows students to act against their assailants through their universities. Typically, this result ends with the attacker being expelled from campus or at least removed from classes or dorms that they share with the victim. The victim has the right to request a restraining order preventing the person from encountering them. Title IX does not replace police reporting; it is a parallel option for the survivors based on civil rights - rather than criminal law.

Under the Clery Act, colleges must accurately track and disclose the number of crimes reported on campus, including sex offenses. Since many of the sexual assaults or rape cases on college campuses go unreported, one still may not get an adequate picture of the total number of rapes on college campuses. Universities who provide false data about campus rapes can be fined by the Education Department.

College Students and Rape

College students are one of the most vulnerable age groups for rape. The “Rape in America Study” reported that over 80% of the women who were raped were under the age of 25.

- 29.3% were under the age of 11
- 32.3% were between the ages of 11 and 17
- 22.2% were between the ages of 18 and 24
- 7.1 % were between the ages of 25 and 29
- 6.1 % were older than 29 years of age
- 3.0% ages were not reported

What Shall I Do Now That I Have Been Raped?

Resource: Rape in America: A Report to the Nation, National Victim Center, 1992.

- 1 out of 5 women and 16 men are sexually assaulted on college campuses [2].
- 90% of sexual assaults that occur on college campuses go unreported [3]
- At one university, 63.3% of the men who raped or attempted to rape someone admitted to being a repeat offender of rapes [4].

Some Facts about Rape in the United States

- 1 out of 5 women and one out of 71 men are likely to be raped in their life time [5]
- 46% lesbians, 74.9% bisexual women, and 43% heterosexual women reported sexual violence other than rape over their lifetime, whereas 40.2% gay men, 47.2% bisexual men, and 20.8% heterosexual men reported sexual violence other than rape over their lifetime [6].
- Almost 1 in 10 women have been raped by an intimate partner over her lifetime, to include-complete penetration, attempted penetration, or alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration. Approximately 1 in 45 men have been forced to penetrate an intimate partner over his lifetime [7].
- 91 % of rape victims and sexual assaults are females, and 9% are males [8].
- In 8 out of 10 cases the victim knew the person who sexually assaulted or rape them
- 8% of rapes occur at work [9].

The Cost of Rape and Impact

- The cost of each rape is approximately \$15, 423.00 [10].
- The annual cost of rape in the United States is approximately \$127 billion, followed by assault cases averaging \$93 billion, murder - \$71 billion, and drunk driving - \$61 billion [11].

Rape Crime Reports

Rape is the most under-reported crime; approximately 63% of sexual assaults go unreported [8].

- Only 12 % of child sexual abuse gets reported [12].
- There is only a 2% - 10% of false reporting. A study which gather information from 8 different communities reported that out of the 2,059 cases of sexual assault, only 7.1 % were considered be false reports [13].
- In Boston, a study of 136 sexual assault cases reported only 5.9% cases were false [4].
- From 2000 - 2003 researchers studied a total of 812 sexual assault cases and discovered only a 2.1% rate of false reports [14-17].

Common Reactions to Rape

- Shock and Disbelief
 - Feeling numb
 - You cannot believe this happened to you
 - You feel disconnected towards people

The survivors feel shock and disbelief that this has happened to them. They are very numb and dazed. The survivors will also withdraw and distance themselves from other people. The survivors want to forget the rape has ever happened. Oftentimes, they attempt to avoid people and situations that remind them of the incident.

- The survivors can't stop thinking about the incident
- They feel that they are unable to wash the person's smell off of them
- When the survivors think about the sexual assault, they feel as if it is happening to them all over again.

For weeks, survivors talk about being unable to get the smell of their attackers off of them. The survivors have intense periods where they are so preoccupied with the thoughts and feelings of nothing but the assault. The survivors experience unwanted memories of the incident coupled with flashbacks and nightmares. Many survivors have reported feeling some of the same sensations felt during the actual assault when they think about the sexual assault.

The feelings of fear and powerlessness.

- Feelings of sadness and like a part of them is lost
- Intense feelings of anger

Many survivors have reported experiencing intense emotions after the sexual assault. At times they felt angry, afraid, anxious, and even depressed.

- Survivors have reported having problems with sleeping at night. They would often awake every night around the time the rape occurred.

Many survivors suffer with physical symptoms such as - sleep disturbances, headaches, and stomach aches. They find it difficult to manage routine activities.

- Self-blame and shame
 - Survivors felt like they could trust the person and believe it was their fault
 - Survivors wonder if other guys would see them as damaged goods

It is common for the survivors to feel guilt and shame after a sexual assault incident. There are a plethora of misconceptions concerning rape. Some survivors blame themselves, doubt their judgement or wonder if they are responsible for the assault. These feelings of shame and self-blame can be reinforced by the other people's reactions around them due to the myths people tend to hold concerning rape. People might blame the survivors and make them feel as if it is their fault they were raped.

Some survivors feel ashamed and say they feel dirty, devalued and humiliated because of the sexual assault. Feelings of shame are often associated with sexual assault – as well as powerlessness and helplessness. Survivors suffer from overall shame for having been forced to participate in a sexual crime against their will and there was nothing they could do. Remember you did not have a choice.

What to Do If You Are Rape

- Relocate to a safe environment
- Should you desire to file a crime report, do so immediately. Reporting this crime can assist you with gaining control over the situation.
- Contact someone you can trust who can provide the support you need; this could include a family member or a friend.
- Maintain all physical evidence of the assault. Do not shower, douche, eat, drink, wash your hands, or brush your teeth until after you have completed your medical examination. Keep all your clothing at the time of the assault and put them in a separate bag; do not use a plastic bag. Do not disturb or clean up the area where the incident occurred.

- Seek medical attention immediately. Report to the hospital emergency room or specialized forensic clinic that treats survivors for sexual assaults. Even if you think you do not have any physical wounds, you still need to have a medical examination. You will need to discuss with a health care provider the risk or possibility of being exposed to sexual transmitted diseases and the possibility of being pregnant as result of the sexual assault. Also, having a medical examination performed is a way to preserve the physical evidence of the sexual assault.
- Should you suspect you have been given a “rape drug” ask the hospital or the clinic to take a urine sample. Drugs, such as Rohyp-nol and GHB, can be detected in the urine or in your blood.
- Keep a journal of as much information as you can remember concerning the sexual assault to include a description of the assail-ant, what happened prior to the incident, during and after. These notes will come in handy when you are filing a police report or should you have to go court.
- Seek the information you need and get whatever questions or concerns you may have answered. After a sexual assault, there will be many choices you will have to make - e.g., obtaining medical care, filing a police report and communicating the incident to others. You can obtain factual information by contacting a rape crisis center in your area, a hotline, or other survivor’s as-sistance program.
- Seek professional counseling. Talk with a counselor who is trained to assist rape survivors. Counseling will assist you with learning how to cope with the emotional and physical impacts of the assault. You can find a counselor by contacting your local rape crisis center, a hotline, counseling services, other survivor’s assistance programs, or RAINN. RAINN is a national victim’s assistance organization. You can contact RAINN at 1-800-656-HOPE. RAINN can also connect you with local crisis centers in your area.

Remember you are not alone and it is not your fault. Seek help, do not try to deal with this on your own. Even if you have waited and have not spoken to anyone about the sexual assault, it is never too late to seek the professional support you need. Rape can be a very traumatic experience so do not wait to begin the healing process. You owe it to yourself to seek the professional help you need. You are not to blame. You did what you needed to do to survive. Many colleges are taking aggressive action to reduce the number of rapes on their campuses by instituting a bystander intervention program where they are teaching people how to intervene and stop assaults from occurring. Even more colleges have adopted the affirmative consent standards, which suggest that a person hasn’t necessarily consented to sexual activity just because they have not screamed to top of their lungs “No”. Many activists also are wanting the policy implemented in high schools to reduce the number of sexual assaults among young people. Colleges are also being sanctioned by legislation as to how they are handling sexual assault cases, particularly those involving athletic coaches shielding star players who have been accused of sexual assault. It is imperative that we create safe campuses across the entire United States. Should someone get sexually assaulted, it is just as important for them to know the necessary steps to take.

A Message for Rape Survivors

By

Linda J. M. Holloway

Rape is not something you ask for; Rape is something which has been taken from you that cannot be regained.

The pain of rape is deep. It swallows your soul.

Leaving the survivor feeling helpless and out of control.

Victims often are victimized over and over again. Sometimes intentional or unintentional by police, family, friends, loved ones, medical care providers just to name a few.

Asking probing questions: What did you do? How could you let this happen to you? You should never have gone to the store alone, and how many times have they told you it’s not nice for a pretty girl like you to live alone?

Why couldn’t you run, fuss, or fight? Did you try calling someone, screaming to the top of your lungs? Oh by the way, what did you have on?

You worry day in, day out, asking God almighty to take the pain away. Because you have restless and sleepless nights.

The pain is so intensely deep; it won’t let you get a good night sleep.

You toss and you turn even though, you leave the light on to comfort you to sleep. It’s midnight and you are still wide awake. You keep hoping you will just fall asleep because you got to get up and go to work the next day. You do not want to crash and burn. You pray ole dear Lord to take this headache away.

You can’t eat, all you think about is the attacker who took your freedom away.

People do not understand. They say it’s been a year or two and you should be over the crisis you been through.

You try to hold your head high and walk with a bit of pride, all you know is you are still hurting deep inside; this is the kind of pain you really can no longer hide.

Everybody wants you be the person you use to be. But, what they do not understand is that that person has been has ripped away. Now you are, the new you. Desperately, trying to forget the past and love the new you, you have become to be. The new you, is not so bad, and it is just life can sometimes give you some really hard blows which pushes you to the floor.

You are a survivor. You are not your pain, or what has happened to you.

You did what you had to do to stay alive. So, I guess you are right, it is time to kiss that part of me good bye. No, it will not be easy, but being raped was not easy either. It certainly is not easy being the person I am now.

So, goodbye pain of yesterday, it has been past time to move on.

<p style="text-align: center;">STOP RAPE CAMPAIGN PLEDGE:</p> <p>I _____ pledge by signing this card, I will do everything in my power to end rape on college campus to ensure they are safe places for everyone. Dated _____.</p>

Links to National Organizations

Security on Campus, Inc. is a national non-profit providing victim advocacy to campus victims of sexual assault and other crimes. They provide peer educators, many of whom are survivors themselves.

Through the V-Day College Campaign, campus anti-rape activists have brought over 450 amateur performances of “The Vagina Monologues” to their schools to benefit grassroots groups working to end violence against women.

Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER) supports campus activists working to rewrite their schools’ sexual assault policies. They are committed to establishing sexual assault policies that are fair and accessible.

Campus Outreach Services offers suggestions for guest speakers and free online research materials. They lobby for sexual assault related legislation and are dedicated to ending violence against women.

RAINN (1-800-656-HOPE)

Sexual Assault Referral Center (SARC)

Movies:

Hunting Grounds

Invisible Scars

Article: Georgetown Ruling Breaks Silence on Campus Rape

Links to Campus Organizations

The Voices Against Violence Project addresses the issues of relationship violence, stalking and sexual violence at the University of Texas.

Men can stop rape

White Ribbon Campaign

www.stopviolence.com/rape.htm

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