

What is acquaintance rape?

Acquaintance rape occurs when someone you know uses force, threats or intimidation to make you have sex. Teenagers and other young women are especially vulnerable to acquaintance rape.

Many acquaintance rapes begin on the part of the perpetrator, with his/her intention to have sex. When the victim does not go along with this plan, the perpetrator uses more aggressive measures to assure compliance.

If you say 'no' and are forced into sex, it's rape. If you decide not to fight back or go along out of fear, this does not mean that you consented. What you choose to do to get through this assault does not change the fact that sex without consent is still rape.

It is never okay to force sex on someone else. Even if you used poor judgment you are not responsible for someone else raping you. You are not at fault if you are raped.

Rape Statistics

- One in five women in Texas are rape survivors.
- One in 20 men in Texas are rape survivors.
- 1.8 million Texans are rape survivors.

A Health Survey of Texans: A Focus on Sexual Assault, 2003



Common Reactions to Rape

There is no right or wrong way to feel after being raped. People are different, consequently they deal with their emotions in many ways. Survivors will commonly experience these feelings:

- Guilt
- Shame
- Shock
- Loss of Trust
- Anger
- Worthlessness
- Self-Doubt
- Fear
- Depression
- Helplessness

Most rape victims experience one or more of the following reactions:

- Anxiety
- Excessive crying
- Nightmares
- Emotional numbness
- Mood swings
- Inability to concentrate
- Panic attacks
- Sleeplessness or sleeping too much
- Eating for comfort or not eating enough
- Sexual problems (avoiding sex or becoming promiscuous)

Many victims believe or are encouraged to believe that they should forget about the rape and get on with their lives. This may work temporarily but seldom works long term. Eventually, the burden of suppressing thoughts and feelings about the rape may begin to affect the survivors work and/or personal life.

The Alcohol & Drug Connection

Alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, the victim, or both has been consistently linked to sexual assault. Researchers have consistently found that approximately one-half of all sexual assaults are committed by men who have been drinking alcohol. Depending on the sample studied and the measures used, the estimates for alcohol use among perpetrators have ranged from 34 to 74 percent (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996). Similarly, approximately one-half of all sexual assault victims report that they were drinking alcohol at the time of the assault, with estimates ranging from 30 to 79 percent (Abbey et al. 1994; Crowell and Burgess 1996).



The cognitive and physical impairments associated with alcohol consumption make it more difficult for victims to successfully resist an assault. A victim's perception of danger may be distorted and it is more difficult to set limits and communicate them clearly. In addition, impaired judgment may result in a misperception of friendliness as sexual intent and increase the sense of power and aggressive behavior of perpetrators.

The use of drugs, such as Rohypnol (Roofies) and GHB (Gamma-OH, G), is making it even easier to victimize an individual. These and other drugs can be slipped into a victim's drink without her or his knowledge. To the observer the victim appears to be very drunk and can easily be 'escorted' from the public area to a secluded area where they are assaulted. Victims may experience amnesia and eventual unconsciousness for 4-12 hours or longer.

Avoiding Acquaintance Rape

Most people are better prepared to avoid an attack by a stranger than by an acquaintance. In reality, you're much more likely to be raped by someone you know. The following guidelines can reduce your chances of being victimized:

- ❁ Communicate assertively and clearly. Be clear with yourself and the other person about whether you want to have sex.
- ❁ Expect respect and avoid those who don't show it.
- ❁ Know your own sexual limits and communicate them clearly.
- ❁ Do not allow a person to touch you if it makes you uncomfortable.
- ❁ Avoid excessive drinking or drugs as they impair judgment and communication skills.
- ❁ Do not leave drinks unattended, which could provide an opportunity for someone to drug you.
- ❁ Do not assume someone else knows what you are thinking or shares your values.
- ❁ Try to avoid situations or locations that keep you isolated from others.
- ❁ Stay away from men who are overly critical or belittling of women.
- ❁ Make a scene if it becomes necessary. Don't worry about looking foolish.



Resources

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
www.rainn.org

Texas Crime Victims Compensation Fund
1-800-983-9933


Sexual Assault Legal Line
1-888-296-SAFE (7273)



6200 La Calma
Suite 110
Austin, Texas 78752
www.taasa.org

Without Consent: Acquaintance Rape



 *The voice of sexual violence survivors in Texas.*

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Free. Confidential. 24/7.

1-800-656-HOPE