



# DATING VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

A toolkit for anyone who has been victimized or knows a victim of dating violence or sexual assault.

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I AM NOT WHAT  
HAPPENED TO ME.

I AM WHAT I  
CHOOSE TO  
BECOME.

CARL JUNG



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# WHAT IS DATING VIOLENCE?

According to the Office on Women's Health (OASH), dating violence is "physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a romantic or sexual partner."

Dating violence is a harsh reality for many individuals. Many people feel trapped to stay in toxic and abusive relationships for fear of injury, death, or other type of harm, despite whether or not they feel love for their partner. Dating violence leaves many people feeling hopeless or depressed and they often blame themselves for the abuse.

If you have been a victim of dating violence, you understand the feelings of loneliness, confusion, and sadness that results from relentless abuse. You have been left hurt and confused as to why your partner, who once appeared to care for you, turns their back on you and abuses you. By standing up for yourself, you not only protect yourself, but show others that dating violence is unacceptable.



# WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs of dating violence include, but are not limited to:



- Sudden change in personality or demeanor from your partner.
- Threats of violence or harm from your partner (can be emotional, sexual, physical, or verbal).
- Harassment and intimidation.
- Your partner uses coercion or forces you to participate in certain activities (ex. sexual coercion).
- Isolating you from your friends and family.
- Continuously puts you down or engages in bullying behavior.
- Love bombing after a physical or verbal fight.
- Your partner cannot take responsibility for their actions or empathize with you.

# STATISTICS

- Most commonly occurs in the United States.
- Women are more likely to be victims of dating violence than men.
- 57% of college students who were in abusive relationships while in college (Knowledge Networks Inc., 2011)
- Dating violence affects every gender, race, and sexual orientation.



- 1 in 4 women experience dating violence.
- 1 in 9 men experience dating violence.
- Dating violence increases the risk of suicidal ideations and attempts among victims.



# HOW TO COPE

The pain you feel will not last forever. Remind yourself of everything you have overcome and be proud of yourself. It is important to continue to utilize coping skills to ensure your mental health and well-being.



There are many positive ways to take care of your mental health. Consider the following coping skills on the right side of this page.

- Seek out mental health services.
- Speak with other survivors. Share your experiences with each other and share different coping skills.
- Remember that your trauma is NOT your fault.
- Consider joining a support group for survivors of dating and domestic violence.
- Pick up a hobby.
- Become an advocate for dating violence prevention.
- Practice self-care.


# SUPPORTING FELLOW SURVIVORS



It is important to remember that you are not alone. Unfortunately, dating violence has affected more people than it should. While it is an isolating and devastating experience, it is vital that survivors stick together to help inspire other victims of dating violence to stick up for themselves and leave their toxic relationships.

If you are a survivor of dating violence, consider volunteering in various locations, such as a women's shelter, to help other survivors. While you have experienced traumatic events, you have the power to help others heal along your healing journey.





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# WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

As defined by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), sexual assault is "sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim."

Sexual assault affects many people in our society and it is vital to remind the victims that it is never their fault. Anyone is at risk of becoming a victim, regardless of gender, age, race, or sexual orientation.

Sexual assault can be perpetrated in many different ways. For example, it can look like forced sexual acts, inappropriately touching someone, saying derogatory things to another person, attempted or completed rape, or threats of sexual violence. One of the most common forms of sexual assault is rape.

There are many effects of sexual assault that can present themselves psychologically, emotionally, and physically. It is important that survivors feel comfortable getting help and are supported and never judged.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSENT

## What is Consent?

Consent is not simply an agreement to engage in sexual activity. Consent must be given at your own free will. Consent must be actively and enthusiastically given in order to proceed with any sexual activity. Without consent, sexual assault is taking place and can lead to severe consequences.

## What Does Consent Look Like?

When giving consent, it is important to discuss what you are comfortable and not comfortable doing. You should feel comfortable expressing your expectations and feelings. If you find your partner is not listening or is not respecting your wishes, you need to end the interaction. Additionally, partners in relationships still require consent. Just because you are someone's partner does not mean consent is implied.



## No Means No.

Let me repeat that: **no means no**. If you do not agree to any sexual contact or interactions and your partner disregards your well-being, it is considered sexual assault. To say it is unfair for someone else to take advantage of you due to their narcissistic needs would be an understatement.

It is also important to remember that your body language can also express whether you consent or not. If you do not consent, but are afraid to verbally say so, your body language reflects your comfort level. For instance, avoiding eye contact or tensing your body are just a couple examples of non-verbal non-consent.

## You Can Change Your Mind at Any Time.

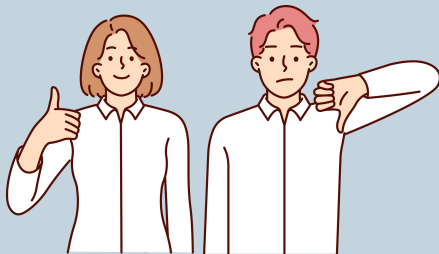
In the event that you gave someone your consent but are no longer comfortable proceeding with any activity, you are entitled to say that you've changed your mind. Consent can be taken away at any time and it is important that your wishes are respected. As previously stated, it is important to discuss all concerns with your partner prior to engaging in any activity and it is important that both parties pay attention to each others concerns.



# WHAT CONSENT LOOKS LIKE

Examples of consent include, but are not limited to:

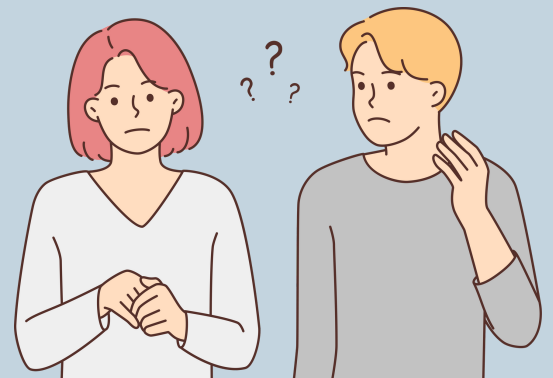
- Saying "yes" enthusiastically by your own decision.
- Giving direct eye contact.
- Regularly checking that your partner is okay and them checking that you are okay.
- Initiating and participating in activity.
- Affirmative cues, like nodding your head in agreement.
- Smiling.
- You are sober and not under the impairment of substances.



Examples of non-consent include, but are not limited to:

- Saying "no" verbally or non-verbally.
- Being forced or coerced into saying yes.
- Consent is NOT dependent on your clothing.
- Not assumed or implied to be given.
- Staying silent.
- Tensing your body.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Crying or expressing visible sadness.
- "I'm not ready for this."
- Moving away or avoiding being touched.

# WHAT CONSENT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE



# PREVENTION & INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

There are many ways to prevent sexual assault and protect victims. Examples of strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Have open discussions on what consent looks like and doesn't look like.
- If you are in a public setting, such as a restaurant or bar, always watch your drink. Many offenders will try to put date rape drugs into drinks.
- If you see someone pressuring another person, always intervene. **If you see something, say something.** If you do not feel comfortable stepping in yourself, find someone who can or contact law enforcement.
- If you're using a dating app, be cautious as to what you share online and with whom you are talking to.
- When walking anywhere, try to walk with a group. If you are alone, pay attention to your surroundings and avoid using your phone.
- Consider sharing your location with trusted people when going out.
- Find someone you trust and confide in them. If you are experiencing trauma, a trusted friend or family member can help you seek treatment.

## BREAKING THE STIGMA

Unfortunately in our society, there are many negative stigmas and myths that surround sexual assault. These stigmas and myths are harmful to survivors and spread misinformation. As more and more misinformation is spread, victim-blaming occurs.

A common myth around sexual assault is that what a victim was wearing can result in rape or sexual assault. This is absolutely false. Clothes do not equal consent. A harmful statement based on this myth is that if the victim was dressed in revealing clothing, they were asking for it. This is so harmful and untrue. If you have ever seen a display of what victims were wearing when they were raped, many of them were dressed in a t-shirt and a pair of jeans.

Another misconception is that if you are in a relationship with someone, casual or romantic, then you cannot be sexually assaulted or raped. Not only is this untrue, it is dangerous. Being in a relationship does not mean consent is thrown out the door. Being raped or assaulted by a partner is an act of betrayal and a clear sign that they do not value your trust or well-being. It is likely that this myth was reinforced by another myth that sexual assault is only perpetrated by strangers. In reality, the majority of victims are victimized by someone they know personally.



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# WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE BEEN VICTIMIZED:

If you have been the victim of sexual assault, one of the most important things you can do is to understand that **it is not your fault**. Many victims blame themselves for their trauma and do not seek help for fear that they will be shamed or blamed for their assault. There are many resources available for survivors of sexual assault.

If you are in danger or at risk for more harm, call your local authorities. It is also important to seek medical attention. It is necessary to ensure you don't have any injuries that you aren't aware of. When seeking medical treatment, survivors are tested for STIs and pregnancy.

As previously stated, many victims do not report their victimization for fear that they won't be believed or that they'll be blamed. Many people have different views on reporting their victimization, and some people choose not to report it to law enforcement. Reporting your victimization to the police can be helpful to your mental health and your healing journey.

To learn more about reporting options, scan the QR code below. You will be directed to an article by RAINN.



In addition to medical treatment, survivors are also given the option to have a sexual assault forensic exam (AKA rape kit). Rape kits can be distressing for survivors, but they are useful for collecting DNA evidence and examining the body for any further injuries. Rape kits vary in states, but usually contain swabs, materials for blood samples, combs, and bags for evidence collection.

When preparing to undergo a rape kit, it is vital to avoid damaging or contaminating any evidence. You should avoid showering or bathing, changing your clothes, or cleaning yourself. This can be very upsetting, but it is important when collecting evidence.

To learn more about rape kits, scan this QR code. You will be directed to an article from RAINN.



# STATISTICS

You are not alone.

- The majority of victims are assaulted by someone they know.
- 1 out of 6 women in the U.S. have been victims of completed or attempted sexual assault.
- 1 out of 33 men in the U.S. have been victims of completed or attempted sexual assault.
- 1 out of 9 girls and 1 out of 20 boys under the age of 18 have experienced sexual abuse or assault.
- Sexual assault affects every gender, race, and sexual orientation.
- People who were victims of childhood sexual abuse are more at risk of revictimization in adulthood.



\*Statistics found from RAINN

## SAFE RESOURCES FOR DATING VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

\*Many of these websites have an "escape" option to quickly exit the browser

**National  
Domestic  
Violence  
Hotline:**

(800) 799-7233

**Rape, Abuse and  
Incest  
National Network  
(RAINN):**

(800) 656-4673  
rainn.org

**NJ Coalition  
Against Sexual  
Assault (NJCASA):**

(800) 601-7200  
njcasa.org

**National Sexual  
Violence Resource  
Center (NSVRC):**

nsvrc.org



# EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT



The trauma of sexual assault can leave negative effects on survivors. These negative effects can be psychological, emotional, and/or physical. Survivors can be put under a great deal of stress and anxiety if these effects are suppressed or swept under the rug. It is important to discuss what you have been through while on your healing journey.

The psychological effects of sexual assault are frequently discussed in our society. Following an assault, many survivors may develop mental health illnesses that they have to learn to cope with. For instance, some survivors develop depression, anxiety, or Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or Complex post traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). They may also experience panic attacks, dissociation, and difficulties with sleeping or eating. Survivors often battle with self-harm and suicidal thoughts and ideations. Some survivors may turn to substances to cope with their trauma, which is damaging to their overall health.

Survivors may be left with physical effects following an assault. Many survivors may be left with physical injuries, such as bruises. They may also be put at risk for developing STIs or becoming pregnant. It is important for survivors to seek medical treatment to treat and prevent any injury or illness.

Suicide and Crisis

Hotline:

**988**

# PATHWAY TO HEALING

The pathway of healing is similar to driving a car down a street. The road may have a few bumps along the way, but they will eventually pass. Healing isn't always easy, but it is possible. When on your pathway to healing, it is important to practice self-care and address any feelings you are experiencing.

## SELF-CARE TIPS FOR SURVIVORS:

- Share your feelings, positive or negative, with someone you trust.
- Do things that make you happy, even if you feel unmotivated. Try going to the movies with friends or go to the mall.
- Manage a healthy sleep schedule.
- Set aside time to relax, take a nap, or meditate.
- Practice coping skills to reduce the effects of anxiety.
- Set a daily routine and stick with it.

You may experience periods of confusing emotions while healing, and that is normal for survivors. You will have highs, where you feel that your trauma doesn't bother you as much as it once did, and you will have lows, where you feel distraught and angry about your trauma. You experienced a horrible event and it is perfectly understandable to feel these overwhelming emotions. When these emotions arise, it is a good idea to share them with a mental health professional who can help you cope with them. In the time you are not with a mental health professional, you can find a close friend or family member to share your feelings with. Those around you care about you and your well-being and will listen to you and support you.

**You are not alone.** There are other survivors that can understand and empathize with your pain. You may encounter bumps in the road and drive through dark tunnels, but in the end there is always light.

YOU ARE NOT A VICTIM FOR  
SHARING YOUR STORY.

YOU ARE A SURVIVOR FOR  
SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE WITH  
YOUR TRUTH.

AND YOU NEVER KNOW WHO  
NEEDS YOUR LIGHT, YOUR  
WARMTH, AND RAGING COURAGE.

ALEX ELLE

# AUTHOR'S Note

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I am currently a senior at Stockton University in Galloway, New Jersey. I am majoring in psychology with a concentration in forensic psychology with a minor in victimology and victim services. I am passionate about studying psychology and mental health and sharing what I have learned with others. As I have continued my education, I have become fascinated with studying the behavior and cognitive processes, along with the motives, of those who commit crimes to get a better understanding of why they engage in crime. While on my own pathway to healing, I realized not only did I want to study forensic psychology, but I also wanted to studying victimology and connect with and help survivors of traumatic crimes.

