

## **Acquaintance or “Date” Rape:**

First of all, rape is rape, it doesn't matter if the suspect is someone you know or a complete stranger. The sad reality however, is that if you are going to be sexually assaulted, your attacker will probably be someone you know, love, or trust. In fact, in Canada, 83% of men who sexually assault women are known to their victims.

Acquaintance rape is a very real problem for women of all ages, but especially those between the ages of 14 and 24. Only 1% of women who have experienced acquaintance rape actually report the crime to police. Acquaintance rape is a real concern for women in today's world, yet there is a sore lack of attention to education and prevention on this matter.

What is date or acquaintance rape? My definition of date rape is any unwanted sexual contact between you and a person you know. Sexual assault is an act of violence, and it can take place with someone you just met, someone you have been dating, or with someone to whom you are engaged or married. Remember, rape is rape. Date rape is every bit as serious an offence as any other type of sexual assault.

Why is date rape such a problem? I believe socialization had a large part to play. If you consider traditional male and female roles, men have always been taught to be aggressors, to get what they want, and not to give up until they have attained their goals. They have been encouraged to experiment with their sexuality because that is "part of being a man."

Women, on the other hand, have been socially conditioned to be passive and dependant, to avoid scenes, and to always be "lady like." Women are discouraged from experimenting with sex. "Good girls" do not fool around or talk about sex; only sluts do. The closest male equivalents for the word "slut" (playboy, philanderer, roué) do not have nearly the same negative connotations.

Studies have also indicated that miscommunication is a factor. There has been a gradual loosening of sexual standards over the past few decades. In the new millennium, it is not unusual for people seeing one another to have consensual sex after just a few dates, behavior which was unheard of not so long ago. Because of these loosening standards, some men have come to expect sex after only a few dates, while many women may not. It is important that couples communicate honestly and frankly about sex and each other's expectations at an early stage in the dating process. Unfortunately, this type of communication is not taught to our younger people early enough to be natural and acceptable.

Finally, perhaps the most important factor contributing to date rape is that some men need the power and control that comes with raping women. These men are sexually

aggressive because they are insecure with their masculinity. They rape to make themselves feel stronger by making someone else feel weak.

## **THE SCARY FACTS:**

One in four young women will be sexually assaulted before the age of 18yrs. When grade school students in the United States were surveyed about sexual assault, the following statistics were revealed:

- 56% of the girls and 76% of the boys believed that forced sex was acceptable under some circumstances
- in the 11-14 age bracket, 51% of boys and 41% of girls said that forced sex was acceptable if the boy spent a lot of money on the girl
- 31% of the boys and 32% of the girls said that it was acceptable for a man to rape a woman if she had past sexual experiences
- 87% of the boys and 79% of the girls believed that sexual assault was acceptable if the man and the woman were married
- 65% of the boys and 47% of the girls stated that it was acceptable for a boy to rape a girl if they had been dating for more than six months

A further survey of over 6,000 college students enrolled at 32 colleges in the United States revealed the following:

- one in four women in college had been a survivor of a rape or attempted rape by someone they knew
- 57% of sexual assaults took place while on a date
- 73% of the assailants and 55% of the survivors had used alcohol or drugs prior to the assault
- 42% of survivors told no one
- 35% of college males admitted that under certain circumstances they would commit rape if they believed that they could get away with it.
- One in twelve male college students admitted to committing acts that met the legal definition of rape, and 84% of those men who committed rape did not label it as such
- 43% of college men admitted to using coercive behavior to have sex, including ignoring a woman's protest and using physical aggression to force intercourse
- 15% acknowledged they had committed date rape, and 11% acknowledged using physical restraints to force women to have sex.

Although there is no single date rape scenario, a study conducted by the Association of American Colleges in 1987 found the following generalities:

- Most date rapes occur when the woman is alone with a man in a home, apartment car, etc.
- Alcohol and drugs are sometimes factors in date rape scenarios. Either the victim is too drunk to realize what is going on, or the male had drunk too much and uses it as an excuse to become sexually active
- Mixed signals are perceived by the man. He interprets friendliness incorrectly: hears önoö as öyesö, especially if it is said mildly; interprets enjoyment of kissing and caressing to mean that the woman wants to have sex, and feels cheated or öled onö if she then refuses
- Most date rapes are spontaneous but some are planned in advance
- The men have usually done it before and have gotten away with it in the past
- Date rapists usually look for women who are unassertive and not popular

## **AVOIDANCE STRATEGIES:**

So given some of the above noted information, what can a woman do to prevent this crime from taking place. Although date rape is not 00% preventable. The more you know about it, the better able you are to avoid it. Remember that while I will be suggesting ways to help women avoid date rape, if it does happen, rape in any form is never the survivors fault.

The Association of American Colleges suggest the following avoidance strategies:

- Examine your feelings about sex
- Set sexual limits: it's our body and no one else has the right to make you do anything that you do not want to do. If you do not want someone to touch you in a specific way, say so and mean it
- Decide early on in the relationship if you would like to have sex. The sooner you communicate with your partner about your sexual limits, the easier it will be for him to accept your decision
- Do not give mixed messages yes means yes, no means no. Be forceful and firm.
- Be independent and aware on your date, For example. Especially when starting to date someone, pay your own way at first
- Do not do anything you do not want to do just to avoid a scene or unpleasantness, or to avoid hurting your dates feelings ö after all, he may be ignoring yours
- Be aware of specific situations in which you do not feel relaxed or in charge. Being öparanoidö is better than being raped. Acknowledge a dangerous situation for what it is. Avoid situations in which men far outnumber women
- If things get out of hand, be loud in protesting, leave, and go for help. Do not wait for someone else to rescue you
- Trust your gut instinct. If you feel you are being pressured, you probably are. If you feel uncomfortable, leave.

- Be aware that alcohol and drugs are often related to date rape. Do not compromise your ability to make responsible decisions
- If you are unsure about a new acquaintance, go on a group or double date. If this is not possible meet in a public place.
- Have your own transportation home or taxi fare, especially on the first few dates
- Be careful when you invite someone to your home or you are invited to his home. These are the two most likely places where date rapes occur

The Association of American Colleges also found that there are certain traits that make men more likely to be sexually aggressive towards women. The following are red flags that you should watch out for:

- Men who do not listen to you or ignore what you have to say
- Men who ignore your personal space or boundaries
- Men who express anger or aggression towards women as individuals or in general
- Men who do what they want regardless of what you want
- Men who try to make you feel guilty or accuse you of being uptight
- Men who are excessively jealous or possessive
- Men who have wrong or unrealistic ideas about women's role in society
- Men who drink heavily

There are also a number of come-on lines that are often used by the date rapist that one should also be aware of:

- Pressure for sex lines; "if you loved me you would"
- Trying to make you feel bad or guilty lines; "Don't you like me? Because if you did, you would"
- Blackmail lines; "I will kill myself if you break up with me"
- Thinks sex is his right no matter what lines; "you have turned me on, now you have to finish what you started" or "we had sex before, so you can't say no now"
- Doesn't take no for an answer lines; "you can't say no because I just spent all that money on you."

If you do find yourself in a date rape situation, there are a number of things that you should remember. First, remain calm. If you panic, you are his for the taking. You need to say "NO" strongly and mean it. Don't smile, don't act friendly, and don't be polite. Tell him that if he does not stop, what he is doing will be rape. If you can, look for an escape route. You need to act as soon as possible. If you do decide to fight back, your goal is to stun and run. Again, studies after studies have found that women who physically resist sexual assault survive with less physical and mental trauma and are no more likely to be hurt than those who did not fight back.

## **WHAT IF YOU FALL VICTIM TO A DATE RAPE:**

Every woman will react differently to being sexually assaulted. In date rape, although the person who rapes you is someone you know, the trauma associated with this crime will still be very intense. Your feelings of trust, both in another human being and in yourself, have been totally betrayed

Many survivors of date rape fear that if they tell someone what happened they will not be believed. Others, through disassociation or denial, may not even identify the sexual assault as a rape. The survivor may also not wish to admit to being sexually assaulted because she was drinking or using drugs. All these reasons, and many more, often mean that the survivor does not ask for the support or counseling she now needs.

The survivor may suffer sleeplessness, nightmares, poor concentration, anxiety, loss of appetite, loss of self-confidence, stress related illness, grief, and despair. Often many survivors become depressed and withdrawn, experiencing fear and a generalized loss of trust. If the survivor is a student, she may transfer to another school or drop out of school altogether.

It is not unusual for the survivor to begin to blame herself for what has happened. Why did I accept a ride from him? I should not have gone to that party .. I should never have gone into his apartment . Why did I let him kiss me? .. How could I have been so stupid? It is important to understand that the person who raped you is at fault. The rapist is the person who committed the crime and not you. Alcohol and drugs, whether used by you or the rapist, do not excuse the rapist's behavior.

Earlier in this post I stated that fewer than 1% of women who have been assaulted by a date or acquaintance actually report the crime to police. Predators who commit these types of sexual assaults have one of the highest recidivism rates of any crime. Why? Because the survivors do not report the crime to the authorities. The predator knows there is a very strong likelihood he will not be caught and therefore may continue to victimize others. By reporting this crime, a survivor is taking control back from the predator and saying to him that what he had done to you is criminal, and he will not get away with it this time, or ever again.

**KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF THAT KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

Strength and Honor

Darren Laur  
Integrated Street Combatives