

 **Training  
by Request**  
An OVC Program

Module 7  
Effects of  
Sexual Assault on Males

  
OVC  
OVC TTAC

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Learning Objectives 

- Distinguish fact from myth regarding male sexual assault.
- Discuss gender socialization.
- Describe the effects of sexual assault on males.
- Discuss how to assist males who have been victims of sexual assault.

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Activity 

*What Do You Know About  
Male Sexual Assault?*

- Read the slide.
- Decide if the statement is a myth or a fact.
- Raise your hand if you think the statement is a myth.

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Myth or Fact?



If a man becomes sexually aroused during assault, he wants or enjoys it.

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The Facts



A man may have liked the attention he was getting, or may have gotten sexually aroused. He may even have wanted some of the attention or sexual contact.

But that does not mean that he wanted or liked being assaulted.

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Myth of Fact?



Sexual assault is less harmful to males than to females.

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## The Facts



Sexual assault harms males and females in ways that are similar and different, but equally harmful.

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## Myth or Fact?



If a female sexually assaults a male, he was “lucky.” And if he doesn’t feel that way, there’s something wrong with him.

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## The Facts



Girls and women can and do sexually assault both boys and men.

Sexual abuse of a male by a female is not “luck” – it is exploitation and it is harmful, especially to boys who are more vulnerable and susceptible to manipulation by an adult female than an adult male.

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Myth or Fact?



Most men who sexually assault boys and men are gay.

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The Facts



Boys and men can be sexually assaulted by straight, gay, or bisexual men. The majority of those who do are straight/heterosexual.

Sexual assault is not related to the sexual orientation of the abusive person.

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Myth or Fact?



Males assaulted by other males must have attracted the assault because they are gay or look gay. Or they become gay as a result.

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## The Facts

Whether a male is gay, straight, or bisexual, his sexual orientation is neither the cause nor the result of sexual assault.

If we focus on the *violence* of sexual assault rather than the *sexual* aspects of the interaction, it is easier to understand that sexual assault has nothing to do with a male's sexual orientation.

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## Gender Socialization

- The process of learning the social expectations and attitudes associated with one's sex.
- Can shape emotional impacts and how males and females respond.
- Begins as soon as a baby is born and continues throughout his or her life.



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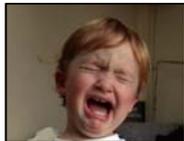
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## Male Biology and Emotions

As infants, males are more emotionally reactive and expressive than females:

- Startle more easily.
- Excite more quickly.
- Less frustration tolerance.
- Distressed more quickly.
- Cry sooner and more often.



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## Gender Socialization of Vulnerable Emotions



By middle of grade school boys are:

- Less aware,
- Less expressive,
- Less empathic – toward others and themselves

Zilbergeld 1992



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## Where Gender Socialization Comes From



Males and females are conditioned by different experiences and behaviors:

- How parents respond to their emotions.
- Responses from peers, games they play.
- Responses from teachers, coaches,
- Media messages and role models.

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## Criticized for "Non-Masculine" Behavior



Act like a man

Boys don't cry

Man up!



Don't be such a wimp

Don't act so gay

That's so *girly*

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## Moral Values and Gender Identity

- Moral values: Good ways to be who you are.
- We can't help but evaluate ourselves:
  - "How *close or far* am I from how I should be?"
  - "Am I moving *toward or away* from my ideal self?"
- Gender is moral, fundamental to identity.

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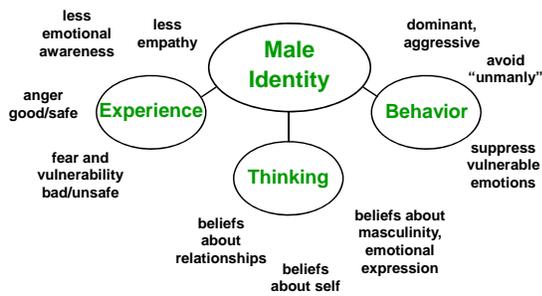
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## Male Identity: Emotions and Values



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## Conditioning and Male Identity

- Thoughts and beliefs are important, but not the core.
- Conditioning goes deeper than what males think or choose.
- It wires and re-wires the brain.
- Less emotional awareness, expressiveness, and empathy = patterns of brain functioning.



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## Sexual Assault Totally Contradicts Male Identity

- No longer feels strong or in control.
- Identification with the traits of his male identity, ingrained since birth, can be shattered.
- Does not know how to deal with the overwhelming vulnerable emotions.



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## Why Males Don't Report Sexual Assault

- Social conditioning.
- Judgment as weak or "not a real man."
- Lack of public awareness.
- Needing and seeking help.
- Talking about and sharing feelings.

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## Three Themes

Men who have been sexually assaulted often have common questions or comments that relate to three themes:

- Legitimacy
- Masculinity
- Homosexuality

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*Themes and Beliefs Related to  
Male Sexual Assault  
Worksheet 7.1*

- Work individually to write at least one response for each statement.
- Report out to the large group.

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- Reporting is less prevalent for males than for females.
- Infrequency of reporting means fewer resources for men.

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Existing resources often:

- Do not address homophobia and sexism.
- Fail to challenge stereotypical notions of male gender roles
- Rarely recognize the specific needs of gay or transgendered victims.

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## Forced Choice



**Option A:** Hyper-masculine.

A "real man." Insecurity and fear drive this choice.

**Option B:** Non-masculine.

Robbed of a masculine identity. Characterized by feelings of failure, defeat, depression, and demoralization.

**Option C:** Healthy masculinity.

Challenge masculine norms, create own identity that is more positive and healthy than the stereotype.

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## Providing Assistance



**Option A Hyper-masculine**

**Option B Non-masculine**

- Acknowledge how the sexual assault has forced him to make choices, which may not be made consciously.
- Explain that other males have had similar reactions.
- Let him know he can develop a more positive, healthier identity.
- Explain that other male survivors of sexual assault have done that.

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## Providing Assistance



**Option C: Healthy Masculine**

- Answer any questions and confirm his concerns are based on gender socialization.
- Acknowledge his courage for facing what he has been through and seeking help.
- Recognize that he has reservoirs of strength to work through the process.

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## Providing Assistance



- Help him engage in reflection and sort out what makes sense, vs. what he has been taught.
- Point out that most questions and concerns are based in myths about males and sexual assault.
- Offer factual information.
- Let the victim sort this information out for himself.
- Take your cues from the victim.

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## Topics To Discuss With Male Survivors



- Negative reactions from others.
- Totality of the assault, not just the sexual aspects.
- Effects on relationships.
- Social conditioning.
- Permission to feel and to have needs.
- Sexuality issues.

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## Negative Emotions



- Distress and depression.
- Self-medication.
- Anger and hostility.
- Withdrawal from social contacts.
- Some form of posttraumatic stress disorder.
- Confusion.
- Sexual anxiety or dysfunction.

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## Referrals

- Recommend therapy if you think it would be beneficial.
- Individual therapy is sometimes best suited for initial treatment.
- Group therapy is often best for healing and change.



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## Caution: Identity Labels Can Be Harmful

- Identity labels can be limiting.
- Men who've had these experiences should be supported in finding their own language.
- Avoid identity labels and use "person-first" language; for example, "a person who's had an experience."

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## Male vs. Female Advocates

- Some males will feel safer with a female advocate than a male.
- Gender socialization may condition males to seek support and comfort from females.
- Conventional masculine values are often obstacles to males seeking help.

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## Male vs. Female Advocates

Make sure your facility and staff:

- Welcome males.
- Have information on sexual assault specific to men.
- Understand the differences between male and female sexual assault.

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## Review of Learning Objectives

- Distinguish fact from myth regarding male sexual assault.
- Discuss gender socialization.
- Describe the effects of sexual assault on males.
- Discuss how to assist males who have been victims of sexual assault.

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## End of Module 7

Questions? Comments?



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