

Unit 8. Sexual Assault

What Is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault includes unwanted sexual touching or penetration without consent, such as rape (vaginal intercourse), forced sodomy (anal intercourse), forced oral copulation (oral-genital contact), rape by a foreign object (including a finger), and sexual battery (the unwanted touching of an intimate part of another person for the purpose of sexual arousal).

Sexual assault is not about love, romance, sex, or physical attraction. It is a violent act. The offender's purpose is to exert power and control, to intimidate, humiliate, punish, or force a victim to do something against his or her will. Research has determined that rapists can be categorized into those who release pent-up rage on the victim, those who have the need to exert power and domination, or those who enjoy inflicting harm on the victim.

Victims of sexual assault usually know the offender. The offender may be an intimate partner, family member, friend, neighbor, or coworker. While most reported sexual assault cases involve women as victims, men also are sexually assaulted. Being in a marriage or relationship does not mean that consent for sex is automatically given. People who are married or in relationships can commit rape or be raped.

In 1992, 62 percent of victims were younger than age 18 at the time of their first assault. Years later, that trend has not changed. Young people are still at a higher risk of being raped. Young children, older people, and people with physical and cognitive disabilities are also more vulnerable to being victimized.

Victims of sexual assault who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the assault are unable to give their consent. They may not fully understand what is happening to them or may even be unconscious.

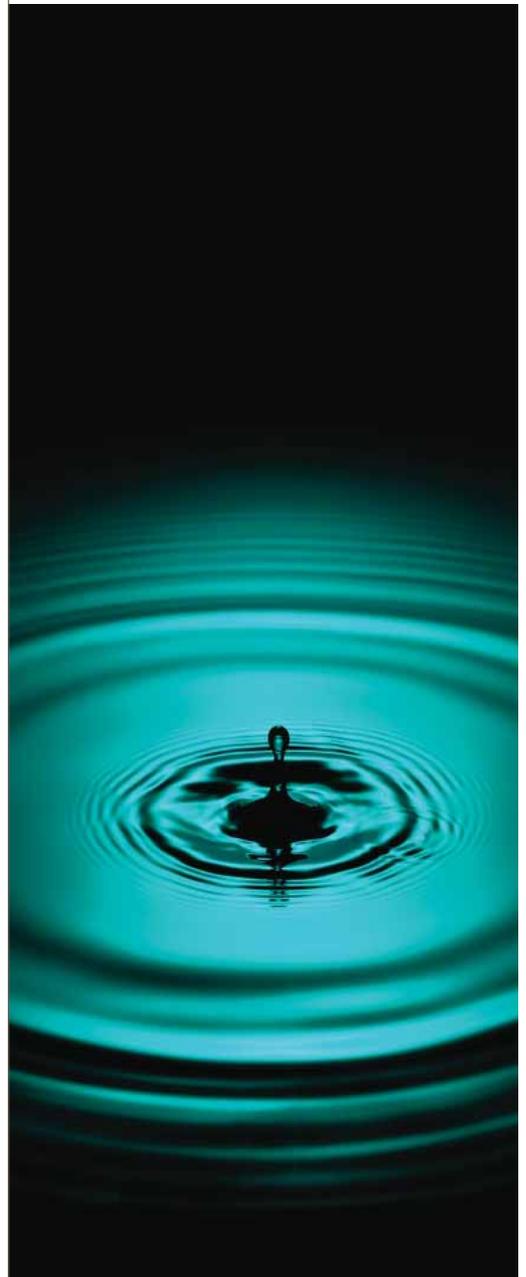
Sexual assault involves physical and nonphysical force. Physical force includes using a weapon, hitting, kicking, choking, or holding someone down. Sometimes, even though force is used, there are no signs of bruising or injuries.

Nonphysical force is called "coercion" and includes verbally threatening a victim into doing something he or she doesn't want to do. If a victim thinks he or she will be in danger by saying "no," this indicates force. Nonphysical force can include the use of peer pressure on a child or teenager.

Some people wonder why the sexual assault victim didn't fight back if what happened was "really" sexual assault. Victims often say that they were confused, "froze" during the assault, or were terrified of angering the offender and causing more force to be used. Victims should not be blamed or questioned if they don't fight back. The sheer trauma of being sexually assaulted can be overwhelming.

Words To Know

- Coercion
- Consent
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Rape
- Sex
- Statutory rape
- Voluntary



The emotional and psychological injuries caused by sexual assault can last much longer than physical wounds. Common reactions include—

- Anger.
- Fear.
- Depression.
- Anxiety.
- Mood swings.
- Problems sleeping.
- Becoming less trusting.
- Flashbacks.

In addition, victims of sexual assault often feel betrayed, unsafe, and unsure of whom to tell and whether they will be believed.

Where Do Sexual Assaults Happen?

- Homes.
- School campuses.
- The military.
- The workplace.
- Senior citizen care facilities.
- Anywhere.

Examples of Physical and Nonphysical Force

- Use of a gun.
- Use of a knife.
- Telling someone, “I’ll tell your boyfriend.”
- Threatening someone, “I’ll hurt your kids.”
- Telling someone, “I’ll break up with you and tell everyone that you’re easy.”





In the News: Sexual Assault Trends

Take a look at the trends concerning sexual assaults below. Which trend bothers you the most?

- More than half of all rapes occur before the victim is 18 years old.
- Sexual assault victims usually know the offender.
- Both women and men are at risk for being raped.

Examples of Sexual Assault

The following are examples and definitions of sexual assault crimes. As you read each story, consider the impact on victims. **Remember: Sexual assault is about violence, coercion, and doing harm. It is not about consensual sex.**

Rape

Carnal knowledge of a person against that person's will and with force, or when a person is incapable of giving consent.

After volunteering to take his 60-year-old blind neighbor grocery shopping, the man brings her home, helps her put the groceries away, and then refuses to leave. Instead, he cuts off her clothes, pushes her down on the floor, and rapes her.

Phillip and Maria have been living together for 5 years. When Phillip gets angry, he hits Maria and threatens her. He takes her to their bedroom and forces her to have sex, even though she repeatedly says “No.”

What do you think happens to the victims?

*My life is divided into two parts:
before the rape and
after the rape.*

—Rape victim

Statutory Rape

Nonforcible sexual intercourse with a person who is under the legal age of consent.

Christina, 14, and David, 22, were casual friends who met 6 months ago at a party. David knew that Christina was underage. They had consensual sex a few times.

Who is affected by this crime and how?

Incest

Nonforcible sexual intercourse between related people who are prohibited from marrying by law.

Jade’s mother was cleaning up her daughter’s room and found a diary with several disturbing entries, including two that said: “My brother came in the shower with me and touched me,” and “He came in my room again last night and told me not to tell.”

What are your thoughts about how Jade’s family is affected?

How do you use force and power against someone you claim to love? There was no love.

—Rape victim

Fondling

Touching the private body parts of another person for sexual gratification, forcibly or against that person’s will. If the victim is unable to give consent because of age or mental incapacity, then fondling may be charged regardless of whether touching was against the person’s will.

Terrence was playing video games with his girlfriend’s little brother, Keenan. Terrence promised Keenan two new video games for a favor. Keenan did as he was asked and took his pants off. Terrence touched Keenan’s penis.

How might Keenan think and feel in response to being fondled?

I don’t know how to help my daughter.

—Father of rape victim

Leticia went to a party with her brother and drank half a beer and ate a plate of food. She didn’t know that Carlos had been watching her for a while. When she wasn’t looking, he put a drug in her beer. Leticia didn’t quite pass out, but she couldn’t talk or move very well. All she remembers is Carlos touching her vagina and breasts through her clothes.

How would you feel if Leticia were your daughter or sister?



What Is the Impact of Sexual Assault?

The following lists outline some examples of how sexual assault affects financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual areas of victims' lives. Add your own examples below.

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital emergency room bills • Ongoing medical bills • Counseling bills • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems sleeping • Sexually transmitted diseases • Pregnancy • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock • Denial • Fear • Shame • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glad to have survived the experience • Wishing they had died • _____ • _____ • _____





Victim Impact: Listen and Learn

After viewing the OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD clip about rape/sexual assault, answer the following questions:

What was the emotional impact of the rape on Debbie?

What was the physical impact of the rape on Debbie?

What was the “domino effect” of Debbie’s rape on her family?



Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Sexual assault victims/survivors may never regain the sense of confidence, self-worth, or dignity they once had. **No one has the right to sexually assault someone, regardless of the circumstances. No one has the right to harm another person.**

How Can I Be Accountable for My Crimes?

What if my sister was raped?

—Dmitri

I knew she was underage and I took advantage of it.

—Bradley

Just because we were on a date didn't mean she owed me anything.

—Aaron

The trauma I inflicted on her must have been awful. How can I start to make it right?

—Calvin

I need to take responsibility for what I did to him.

—Jaclyn

What can these offenders do to show that they are changing their thoughts and behavior?

Additional Activities

Activity B – Susan

How might Susan be affected in each of the following situations?

Assault

Susan is walking to a mall to go shopping and takes a shortcut through an alley. As she nears the end of the alley, a man attacks her. He grabs her, throws her to the ground, hits her in the face, and steals her purse.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Rape

Susan is walking to a mall to go shopping and takes a shortcut through an alley. As she nears the end of the alley, a man attacks her. He grabs her, throws her to the ground, hits her in the face, and rapes her.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Acquaintance Rape

Susan is out on a date with her boyfriend. He kisses her and Susan kisses him back. He begins to remove her clothing and she responds with “No!” and struggles with him. He refuses to stop and rapes her.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Sex

Susan is out on a date with her boyfriend. They talk about whether they are both ready to have a physically intimate relationship with each other and agree that they are. At the end of the evening, they decide to spend the night together and have sex.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Are the emotions the same or different in each situation? How do you account for similarities or differences?

Define "rape."

How does society's attitude about sexual assault affect a rape victim?

What is the difference between "giving consent" and "cooperating" in this context?

Activity C – Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson, age 72, lives with her 76-year-old husband. Both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are retired. Mr. Johnson has gone to the Laundromat. Mrs. Johnson answers the door and a stranger asks her if she has any yard work for him. Mrs. Johnson tells him that she doesn't.

As Mrs. Johnson is closing the door the man pushes his way in, knocking her to the floor. He kicks her and demands money. Mrs. Johnson begs the man not to hurt her and tells him all of her money is in her purse. The man becomes angry when he discovers only \$13 and tells Mrs. Johnson he is going to teach her a lesson for insulting him. The man beats and rapes Mrs. Johnson.

What is the impact on Mrs. Johnson?

Who else has been victimized? How do you think those people feel?

Do you think the man would have raped Mrs. Johnson if she had given him more money?

Yes No

If Mrs. Johnson was your grandmother, would you be embarrassed to talk to her about what happened?

Yes No . . . Why or why not?

What do you think Mr. and Mrs. Johnson's family and friends can do to help?

Who else can help?

Activity D – Andre

Andre, 17, was kidnapped by a man, taken to an abandoned building, and tied up. He was sexually assaulted and lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, he was in an alley in an unfamiliar area of town.

Will Andre call the police?

- Yes
- No

Will Andre tell his family?

- Yes
- No

Will Andre seek help from a sexual assault center?

- Yes
- No

Imagine you are Andre. What are your thoughts and feelings following the attack? What are you going to do following the attack?

Imagine that Andre is a member of your family. What are your thoughts and feelings after being told of the attack? What are you going to do to assist Andre?

