

Coping with College Series

Setting Ground Rules May Help Prevent Date Rape

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Chances are you know someone who has survived a date rape.

Date or acquaintance rape refers to cases in which the rapist and the survivor previously knew each other. These rapes do not fit the stereotypical image of a mad stranger jumping out of the bushes late at night, attacking another person.

A 1991 survey of 32 campuses by the National Institute of Mental Health indicated that one in four women were victims of rape or attempted rape.

However, date rape usually goes unreported. In 1995, Finkelson and Oswald found that 5 percent of the women that they studies had been raped in college; none of these women reported the rape to campus security or the police.

These women did not report the rape for different reasons. Some were worried they would be judged negatively, some were embarrassed, while others blamed themselves for being intoxicated when the rape occurred.

College is an exciting time, but there are precautions that individuals should take in order to protect themselves. Meeting new people and forming relationships is clearly an exciting aspect of the college experience. However, not everyone you come in contact with in the college environment shares your values, ideals or moral standards.

Being cautious and using good sense can help make you safer and less vulnerable to sexual crimes.

The following suggestions are some things you can do, in order to be more prepared and aware:

1. Set sexual limits for yourself in advance. No one has the right to force you to do anything that you are not comfortable doing.
2. Discuss your feelings and limits clearly and assertively. As a rule, if you are not comfortable with and cannot talk about what you are doing sexually, then you probably shouldn't be doing it. The sooner you let someone know what your limits are, the more empowered you will feel. When you say "yes," mean it, and when you say "no," mean that. Silence is often interpreted as yes and that may lead to a dangerous situation, as you may not be taken seriously when it really counts.
3. Trust your intuition. If you feel uneasy or fearful about a particular situation, place or person, act on your intuition and go to a place where you feel safer.
4. Use extreme caution when you or others are using alcohol or drugs. These substances frequently alter ones judgment and reduce the ability to stay in control of oneself and ones environment.
5. Consider enrolling in a self-defense class. Self-defense classes are valuable to help women feel more powerful and self-confident.

6. Watch out for yourself and others. If you hear someone call for help, respond and call the police.

If you are someone you know has survived a rape and fell like you could benefit from our services, please contact the Student Counseling Services.