

Rape Myths, assumptions, and stereotypes are harmful and hinder our society from effectively dealing with and eradicating sexual violence. Listed below are some of the most common 'myths' about sexual violence with information on the facts of this very serious subject.

1. Myth: Some people 'ask for it' by dressing provocatively or drinking too much.
Fact: No one 'asks' for sexual assault or deserves to be sexually assaulted. The way a person dresses, how much they drink, or if they use drugs – this does not mean that a person gives up the right to say what happens to their body.
2. Myth: Some men just can't help themselves if the girl is really beautiful and sexy.
Fact: This type of thinking is just downright wrong and harmful for a variety of reasons. This type of myth supposes that men have no way of controlling themselves as well as assuming wrongly that sexual assault is about lust and attraction. Make no mistake, sexual assault is an act of violence and aggression; sexual assault is less motivated by attraction and more motivated by the feeling that someone needs to exert power and control over another. These types of myths also assume wrongly that sexual assault is always perpetrated by a male upon a female.
3. Myth: Sexual assault is committed by men upon female victims.
Fact: Sexual assault can be committed by any gender identity upon any other gender identity. Sexual assault can happen to any person regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation/identity.
4. Myth: If people would just avoid 'dangerous areas' then they wouldn't need to worry about being sexually assaulted.
Fact: Sexual assault is more likely to occur in a residence rather than down a dark alley. Most victims know their attacker – whether it is an acquaintance, someone who they thought was a friend, or a current/former intimate partner.
5. Myth: Someone who was truly raped will be hysterical and upset when they talk about what happened.
Fact: Individuals may process trauma differently than others. A victim of sexual violence may go through a variety of emotions or they may be numb. There is no perfect 'reaction' that a 'true' victim will display.
6. Myth: It wasn't rape if the victim didn't physically fight back.
Fact: Someone who is being assaulted has to do what they feel is best in order to survive the assault. And sometimes, people freeze with fear. Other times, even just the threat (implied or directly stated) of physical violence will make someone comply with an

attacker's demands. Every person responds differently. Just because someone does not physically fight back does not mean that they consented to what happened.

7. Myth: A 'real' rape victim reports to the police what happened right away. Someone who waits to report or just reports it to the school is probably lying or just wants to get revenge on someone.

Fact: Delayed reports in sexual assaults are very common and do not signify that someone is lying. Sometimes victims need time to process what has occurred to them and it may take time for them to feel safe to come forward. When the people involved in a sexual misconduct situation know each other well, have a prior relationship, or have mutual social circles it is not at all uncommon for a victim to feel fear of reporting. Just because someone needs time to process and weight their options does not mean that they are making a false report. It is not easy to talk about being sexually assaulted – it may cause the person to relive what happened to them. Often there is fear that others will not believe them or blame them for their own attack.

8. Myth: If someone does not say 'no' then they must have wanted to have sex.

Fact: It is never a good idea to assume that absence a 'no' means 'yes.' Yes means Yes. Consent should be clear, knowing, and voluntary – it is never assumed from silence. When a person displays hesitation or reluctance, the person initiating sexual contact has an obligation to get effective consent before proceeding further!

9. Myth: If a man gets an erection or ejaculates during a sexual assault, then that means they really did want it and were not assaulted.

Fact: Getting an erection and ejaculation can result from physical contact and stress – they are physiological responses. Some male victims of sexual assault are ashamed to come forward because their body had a response during the assault that makes them think no one will believe they were assaulted. Sexual predators will exploit this response and use that to shame or manipulate the male victim into thinking that because they got an erection or ejaculated that they must have really wanted the sexual contact all along.

10. Myth: If women would just stop drinking so much, there wouldn't be so many sexual assaults.

Fact: Alcohol is used by perpetrators to lower the defenses and incapacitate their victims. Alcohol may also be used by a perpetrator to excuse their behaviors. Alcohol is not an excuse or cause for rape. Drinking alcohol does not mean that someone gives up the right to choose what happens to their body.