

SURVIVORS OF RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Why me?

Women of every age, race or religious background are raped. No matter where you were, what you were doing, what you were wearing, what you were saying, if you were drunk or under the influence of drugs, you did not deserve this. The responsibility **always** lies with the attacker, **not you**.

Our statistics show that women are more often attacked by someone they know and trust. No matter who the attacker was you did not deserve what has happened.

How do you feel?

Everyone reacts differently to a traumatic event. Whatever you are feeling is a normal response to what has happened.

- If you have been attacked recently you may be in shock. This can mean that you are feeling numb, unemotional, be in total disbelief, be crying, shaking, laughing or physically being sick.
- You may feel to blame and responsible for what has happened.
- You may be having nightmares or experiencing difficulties sleeping.
- You may be "reliving" the events (flashbacks), these can be triggered by a sound, situation or smell and can be very frightening (see the section on survivors and flashbacks).
- You may have lost confidence, trust in yourself and others.
- You may be feeling worthless or have feelings of self-hatred.
- You may be finding it difficult to cope with day-to-day life.
- You may be feeling angry, irritable and be short-tempered with those close to you.
- You may feel dirty and ashamed about what has happened.
- You may be depressed, upset and tearful a lot of the time.
- You may feel suicidal.
- You may be afraid, e.g. of people, places, being on your own.
- You may be experiencing relationship or sexual difficulties.

The list above is by no means everything you may be feeling and indeed some women experience none of the above.

Some women cope by...

- Using drugs (illegal or prescribed) and / or alcohol.
- Eating control, bingeing, vomiting, starving (anorexia and bulimia)
- Self-harming / injuring e.g. cutting, burning, scrubbing.
- Forgetting and completely blocking out the memory of what has happened - these memories can be triggered by events later in life e.g. birth of a child, death of the abuser, TV programme.

You must remember that you did not ask for this to happen to you. Many women find that speaking about their experience, although often difficult and painful, helps them come to terms with what has happened. Speak to someone you can trust or contact the Centre.

The healing process

Healing can take time. Take things at your own pace, there is no right or wrong about how long it can take to come to terms with something like this. Don't forget you don't have to go through this process alone. Break the silence and share your thoughts and feelings about your experience with a trusted friend or family member, partner or another survivor, or speak in confidence to a trained support worker at the Centre.

Even if the attack was some time ago, your feelings are important.

If you have just been raped or sexually assaulted

- Try to be somewhere that feels safe.
- It's likely that you will be in some form of shock after what has happened. It's important to keep warm and drink plenty of fluids.
- If possible, see if a friend or someone you trust can be with you.
- Have any injuries treated by your doctor or at a hospital.
- If you think you would like to report the incident to the police, you can either contact the police directly, or speak to someone at the Centre. The section on police and courts in this website can give you more information about what reporting might involve.
- If there is a possibility of pregnancy you may want to take the morning after pill (up to 72 hours after) or have a coil fitted (up to 5 days after). To do this, go to your Family Planning Clinic or GP.

- If you are worried about sexually transmitted infections, you can have fully confidential advice and treatment from your nearest genito-urinary medicine clinic. You do not need a letter from your doctor. You don't have to give the clinic your real name and you could ask a friend or a Centre support worker to go with you.

HELPLINE SUPPORT

You can telephone our helpline for support or information on 01738 630965
We also have a 24 hour answering machine, so that at any other time messages can be left and will be returned discreetly, as soon as possible.

Write to: WRASAC P & K, P.O. Box 7570, Perth, PH2 1BY

Email info@perthshirerapecrisis.org

USEFUL CONTACTS

Samaritans	(01738) 626 666
Genito-Urinary Clinic	(01738) 473 220
Police Family Protection Unit	(01738) 892 911
Perthshire Women's Aid	(01738) 639 043
Victim Support	(01738) 567 171
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	(0141) 331 2726
Citizens Advice Bureau	(01738) 624 301
Bristol Crisis Service for Women	(0117) 925 1119
Childline	(0800 1111)