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We are very excited to introduce the “ASK WARIF” Column – a monthly interactive section that will educate, motivate and encourage as we discuss all issues surrounding gender based violence and share some of our experiences working at the WARIF Rape Crisis Centre. All questions submitted will be answered by our team of experts and qualified personnel which include physicians, counsellors, lawyers, law enforcement and everyday men and women who have had personal encounters with rape and sexual violence and are willing to share their stories in the hope that it helps prevent the next individual from experiencing the same.  
  
Rape can be described as forced sexual intercourse without Consent. It always involves penetration which could be vaginal, anal or oral. This penetration may be with a body part or an object. It is considered the most pervasive form of sexual assault and is a sexual act which presents as physical, psychological and emotional violation, inflicted on an individual.  
  
An important aspect of the definition of rape is Consent  
  
– This is the wilful, verbal,enthusiastic and informed agreement by an individual to engage in sexual activity with another individual. Before engaging in sexual activities with another person, it’s impor-  
  
tant to understand that;  
  
  
  
• A minor cannot give sexual consent. In Nigeria, this is under the age of 18  
  
• Consent is a choice of the other party and it’s neither gotten under the threat of force nor by bribery with gifts  
  
• Sexual consent can be given and revoked  
  
• The party to give consent must be conscious and understands the implication of what is  
  
being requested of her/him – it cannot be given under the influence of alcohol or a known or unknown substance and cannot be given if asleep or unconscious  
  
Every survivor has a valid experience when it comes to consent and rape and it is not unusual to wonder if one’s specific circumstance constitute alleging rape. If you are unsure about your circumstance, then you must consider this suspicion seriously and act on it by seeking assistance at a rape crisis centre like WARIF Centre and report this to the nearest police station.  
  
In a situation where the survivor says “NO” and sexual intercourse is still forced upon them, this is considered rape. It does not matter at what point during the act the recipient refuses and says no.  
  
It is still also considered rape even if the survivor:  
  
– Did not physically fight back and lay still  
  
– Did not scream  
  
– Did not report the incident to the authorities  
  
–Experienced bodily functions such as ejaculation  
  
–Is well known to the perpetrator as a family member, a close friend or if the survivor is in an intimate relationship or a spouse of the perpetrator  
  
The act of rape can happen to anyone, regardless of their race, gender, colour, ethnic or geopolitical background; Our religious affiliations, education level achieved, job qualification or socioeconomic status plays no part in who can get raped. It is also never the fault of the survivor. It does not matter what she/he was wearing, where she/he was or what she/he was doing – it is always the fault of the rapist, as rape is a conscious decision.  
  
If you have been raped or you know someone who has, please visit us at The WARIF Centre – 6, Turton Street, off Thorburn Avenue, Sabo, Yaba or call our 24-hour confidential helpline on 08092100009. We are here to help – you are not alone.  
  
If you have any Questions, please send to: [email protected]