

# **SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**a zine stuffed full  
of information  
about sexual  
assault, and what  
kinds of help you  
can get and give.**

**AVALON Sexual Assault Centre**



# sexual assault

## **TYPES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT:**

- Criminal Harrassment (stalking)
- Sexual Harassment
- Incest
- Date/Acquaintance Sexual Assault (date rape)
- Stranger Rape
- Gang Rape
- Sexual Exploitation
- Psychological Sexual Violence
- Marital Rape
- Same Sex Sexual Assault
- Gay Bashing
- Heterosexism

**SEXUAL ASSAULT** is a crime of power and control over the victim/survivor, which can range from verbal obscenities to rape. Sexual assault is a crime of violence because the victim/survivor is subjected to the aggression of the assailant, and is therefore NOT a crime of sex. It not only violates someone physically but may also affect a person's sense of safety and ability to control her/his life. No physical injury is necessary to prove that an offence has occurred.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

In Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) there is, on average, a sexual assault reported every day (HRP 2006). In Canada there are 65 reports per day on average (StatsCan 2005).

Only 8% of women who have experienced sexual assault report it to police (Juristat, 2004)

Nova Scotia has the highest rate of sexual assault of any Canadian province, with most provinces reporting almost half the amount (Juristat, 2004)

# sexual violence is:

- an umbrella term for sexual assault, abuse, harassment, etc. It is used to indicate the vastness and all encompassing impact unwanted sexual acts can have on the individual and on a society.

- a crime of power and control that is used to instill fear and submission. Often there is a perceived right to commit sexual assault as a result of entitlement, relationship to the victim, in war, and/or as a result of beliefs about the victim. This dynamic of violence in the context of power and control is reflected in all acts of sexual violence regardless of the sex of the perpetrator or of the victim.

## did you know?

84% of sexual assault victims in Canada are female and  
91% of abusers both of females and males are men.

(Juristat, 2004)

Who owns sexual violence? Is it the victim's responsibility because it happens to her/him? Is it the offenders's responsibility because he/she commits it? The answer is that sexual violence is a social issue, and that everyone is responsible to help end it.

It is not news that our society pardons unequal gender roles for men and women. In a patriarchal society men dominate women, one of the results of this is sexual violence. Sexual violence continues to exist because of patriarchal power imbalances that exist between men and women which are perpetuated and condoned in our society. Sexism, prejudice and discrimination based on sex and gender are some of the issues that stem from the presence of these unequal sex roles and help to contribute to the reality of sexual violence in our lives. To eliminate sexual violence these attitudes and beliefs, as well as the unequal distribution of power which sustains them, need to be addressed, challenged and changed.

## A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT



No one invites, causes or deserves to be sexually assaulted. There are no exceptions. Perpetrators are 100% responsible for their actions. Under no circumstances do victims/survivors invite sexual violence, regardless of what they are wearing, how they are acting, what their profession is, whether they are drinking or doing drugs, whether they have been sexually involved with the person before, etc.

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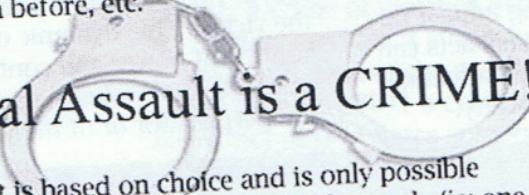
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Consent means saying "yes" because you want to!! "No" always means no. If someone tells you to stop a sexual activity, and you continue with it, you are committing a crime.

**IF A PERSON IS DRUNK, HAS PASSED OUT, IS ASLEEP, HAS BEEN DRUGGED, OR IS ON DRUGS, THEY ARE UNABLE TO GIVE CONSENT.**



## Sexual Assault is a CRIME!

Consent is based on choice and is only possible when there is equality between both people (ie: one person does not have authority of any kind over the other). Agreeing to having sex because of guilty, pressure, sense of obligation or just to fit in with the group is not true consent.

Silence, passivity or ambiguous conduct do not imply consent. There is NO SUCH THING as implied consent. Consent is when voluntary, overt indication is given (ie: saying yes).

# SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUS

Sexual assault on campuses is extremely prevalent, however very few people report it or seek help dealing with the trauma. Many people are afraid that they will be in trouble or not be believed because they were drinking (sometimes underage) or taking drugs.

**sexual assault is never  
the fault of the victim  
no matter what**

Among university students, physical and sexual coercion ranges from **20 – 30%** and the estimates are even higher when verbal and emotional abuse are considered.

The most common form of violence on campus is rape. **1 in 6** women attending college or university is a survivor of rape.

In a national survey on the victimization of women on university and college campuses found that:

- **20%** of female students said they gave into unwanted sexual intercourse because they were overwhelmed by a man's continued arguments and pressure.
- **6%** of female students said that they had unwanted sexual intercourse because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force.
- **13%** of female students said that, when they were drunk or high, a man attempted unwanted sexual intercourse.

# SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUS

By going to university we are removing ourselves from our old support systems which leaves us vulnerable to people who are ready to take advantage of situations in which they know they have relatively little chance of getting caught.

**34%**

of reported sexual assaults have occurred to students.

**45%**

of reported sexual assaults have happened to people between the ages of 15 and 24

**57%**

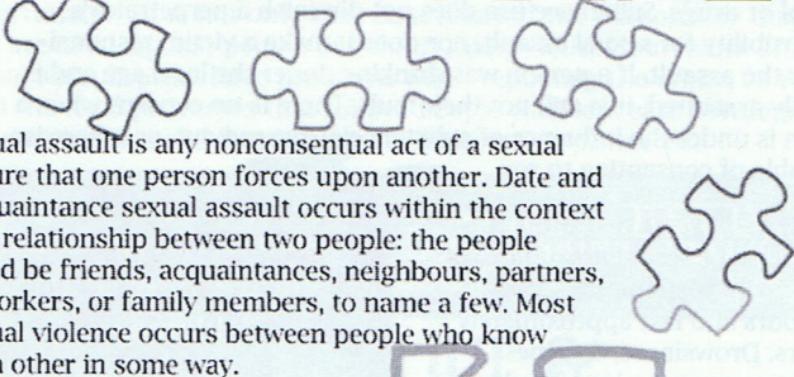
people accused of sexual assault are between the ages of 18 and 34.

## VULNERABILITY

university students are vulnerable to being sexually assaulted and committing sexual assault. Peer pressure, need for acceptance, alcohol, drugs, feelings of invincibility are all factors in this vulnerability. Regardless of this or any other factors though, there is never an excuse or reason for committing sexual assault. If you are sexually assaulted it is not your fault. You do not deserve to be violated for any reason.

# acquaintance and relationship sexual assault

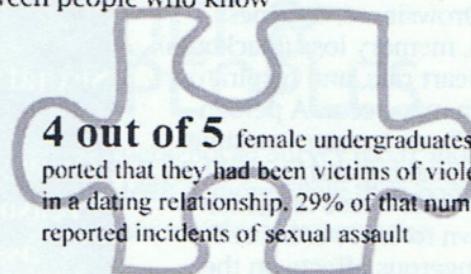
# DATE RAPE



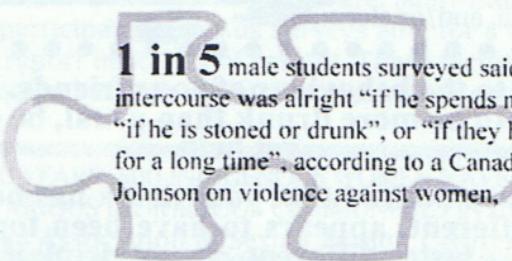
Sexual assault is any nonconsensual act of a sexual nature that one person forces upon another. Date and Acquaintance sexual assault occurs within the context of a relationship between two people: the people could be friends, acquaintances, neighbours, partners, coworkers, or family members, to name a few. Most sexual violence occurs between people who know each other in some way.



**1%** of date rapes are reported to the police



**4 out of 5** female undergraduates reported that they had been victims of violence in a dating relationship. 29% of that number reported incidents of sexual assault



**1 in 5** male students surveyed said that forced intercourse was alright "if he spends money on her", "if he is stoned or drunk", or "if they had been dating for a long time", according to a Canadian study by H. Johnson on violence against women.

# DRUG FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT

## **NOTHING WARRANTS SEXUAL ASSAULT!**

People may be less willing to report sexual assault if they were using alcohol or drugs. Substance use does not diminish a perpetrator's responsibility for sexual assault, nor does it make a victim responsible for the assault. If a person was drinking under the legal age and is sexually assaulted, it is still not their fault. There is no consent when a person is under the influence of substance(s), passed out, or otherwise incapable of consenting to sex.

### **SIGNS OF DRUGGING**

The effects of sexual assault drugs are felt within 30 minutes, peak in 2 hours and last approximately 8 hours. Drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, memory loss (blackouts), reduced heart rate, and respiratory depression may occur. A person may experience nausea, vomiting, difficulty speaking and/or feel too hot or too cold. These drugs have been known to cause coma and death. Dangerous effects on the body increase in the presence of alcohol, marijuana, and/or sleeping pills.

If you have been sexually assaulted you are not to blame.

**Sexual Assault is ILLEGAL**

**Drugging someone for any reason, including sexual assault, is a crime!**

- Be alert to the behaviour of your friends. If someone appears to be more drunk than usual, be concerned, get help.

- If you have noticed that your drink has been moved, looks different, appears to have been topped up or tastes different, do not drink it.

# SEXUAL ASSAULT & PEOPLE OF COLOUR

Many people of colour are victims/survivors of sexual assault because of racist values held against them, and the abuse of power based on race.

Unfortunately, it is not only the racist ideas of the perpetrator that are used against people of colour, many victims/survivors of sexual assault often have problems when reporting the crime, as well as in the legal processes that follow. People with less skin privilege are more vulnerable and less likely to be believed or protected.

RACISM IS USED BOTH OVERTLY AND COVERTLY AS A TOOL OF POWER TO BE USED AGAINST PEOPLES OF COLOUR

# SEXUAL ASSAULT & INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

according to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), indigenous peoples are **THREE TIMES** more likely than non-indigenous peoples to experience a violent victimization.

The statistics on the prevalence of sexual assault against indigenous peoples do not show the whole picture. Many indigenous peoples do not participate in census surveys and, for a variety of reasons, do not report incidents of assault. These factors suggest that the rate of sexual assault amongst indigenous peoples could be much higher.

IN THE LAST 20 YEARS, 500 INDIGENOUS WOMEN HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM VARIOUS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN CANADA  
(Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, 2005)

# SEXUAL ASSAULT & DISABLED PEOPLE

society isolates people with disabilities which makes it more difficult for disabled victims/survivors of sexual assault to access help. Since sexual assault is about power, it is easier for a perpetrator to overpower a disabled person.

Poverty, isolation and dependence on attendants services make people with disabilities far more vulnerable to violence.

**People who are disabled are TWICE as likely to be sexually assaulted than those who are not.** (Enable Link, 1993)

**83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime** (METRAC, 2001)

# SEXUAL ASSAULT & IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants who have experienced sexual assault before or after their arrival to Canada face another set of obstacles.

If they do not speak French or English it is extremely difficult to find help.

**Racism, Fear, and Cultural Intolerance** can lead to the targeting of immigrants for sexual assault by those who wish to exercise power and dominance over them.

An immigrant who has been sexually assaulted may find themselves in a position where if they take action against the perpetrator they will be ostracized by their community.

- 9 Often it is difficult to find help that is understanding of different cultures.

# GAY BASHING



is emotional, physical, or sexual violence committed against people because they are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Sexual violence does occur between people of the same sex. Sexual violence is not about sex, it is about power and control regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. There is a vital need for recognition of sexual assault in lesbian, gay, bisexual relationships and same-sex stranger assault.

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people fear coming forward to report sexual violence because of the degree of homophobia (the irrational fear, hatred and ignorance of LGB people) and transphobia (irrational fear, hatred and ignorance of people who are transgender) that exists in our society. They fear they will not be believed, or treated fairly, because of their sexual orientation or gender identity – this belief is often a reality. Fear of being judged or discriminated against based on sexuality prevents many people from reporting their experiences of sexual violence.



# HETEROSEXISM

is a belief or argument that male/female sexuality is the only natural, normal, or moral mode of sexual behaviour, and is also used to refer to the effects of that cultural ideology (paralleled with sexism and racism). It's the socialized idea that heterosexual is the 'norm' and anything else is 'other'. It can also be used to refer to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

**HETEROSEXIST CONTROL** is the threat to expose someone for being lesbian, gay, or bisexual to family, friends, coworkers, etc.

## 10 COMMON STRATEGIES GIVEN TO WOMEN SO THEY CAN AVOID BEING SEXUALLY ASSAULTED:

- Don't walk alone at night.
- If you have to walk at night, stick to well lit areas.
- Always check the inside of your car before getting into it.
- Have only your first initial listed in the phone book or on your mail box.
- Always ask for photo ID before opening the door to a delivery person.
- If you are home alone in the evening, close all blinds and curtains so no one can see in.
- If a stranger telephones, do not let on that you are home alone.
- Do not accept open beverages from anyone except a server or bartender if you are out at night.
- At a bar or party, do not leave you drink unattended.
- Always go out in pairs or groups, and observe friends for abnormally inebriated behaviour (because this could be a sign that they have been drugged).

# P R E V E N T I O N

64% of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim

(Juristat, 2004)

1 in 5 violent incidents take place in the victim's home or on their property

(Juristat, 2004)

### ASSUMPTIONS BEHIND THESE STRATEGIES:

- Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by strangers.
- Most sexual assaults occur in places other than a private home.
- If assaults do occur in a private home, they occur when a stranger breaks in.
- By restricting their own behaviour, women can prevent sexual assault from happening to them.

## WHY THESE STRATEGIES DON'T ALWAYS WORK:

- The majority of sexually assaulted women know their attacker. While stranger assault does occur it is less common.
- More than half of reported sexual assaults occur in private homes. The majority of those (38%) occur in the victim's home. Another common location is the attacker's car.
- As long as we direct prevention efforts at women, we refrain from looking at the real problem. The behaviour of perpetrators is not deterred by prevention aimed at victims. Restrictions on how to behave will not stop perpetrators from committing sexual assault.
- Prevention strategies for women create a climate of self-blame for the victim. Such strategies reinforce the myth in our society that women are responsible for anticipating and preventing the violence, intentional acts perpetrated against them by people they trust. Faith in these prevention strategies inevitably leads a victim to asking herself/himself the question: what did I do wrong?

## AWARENESS

### WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT SEXUAL ASSAULT:

- Believe, take seriously and support survivors who come forward.
- Challenge sexism.
- Challenge society to make the statement "don't rape", instead of "don't get raped".
- Let your community leaders know that you will not tolerate sexual violence.
- Sexual assault is a criminal offence, listed in the Criminal Code of Canada. Treat it as such: do not minimize, justify, or ignore sexual violence.

# WHAT TO DO IF: you have been sexually assaulted...

**REMEMBER: NO MATTER WHAT,  
THIS WAS NOT YOUR FAULT**

the perpetrator is always 100% to blame

There is often a strong need to be nurtured at this time. Being able to talk to someone about the experience is very important. Many survivors find that the impact of the assault is more emotionally devastating when it is minimized, ignored or not talked about. It is important for the survivor to find the support of people who can remain non-judgmental. Sexual assault centres, help/crisis lines, therapists, and family doctors are all examples of people or places where this kind of support may be found.



There are a whole variety of reactions to the trauma of sexual assault from physical to emotional, mental to spiritual

It may be helpful to have support, comfort and understanding at this time. Although family and friends may seem to be a logical choice for support, remember that they may be having their own feelings and reaction to what has happened. These can interfere with their ability to be helpful



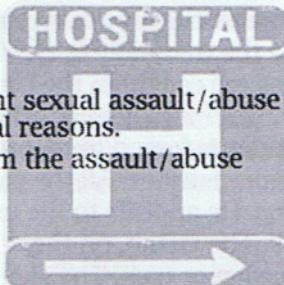
INDIVIDUALS REACT AS DIFFERENTLY TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AS THEY DO TO ALL OTHER TRAUMATIC EVENTS. THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO RESPOND.

# what are the options and what to expect

If you decide to go to the hospital:

It is important that a victim/survivor of recent sexual assault/abuse consider seeking medical attention for several reasons.

- to take care of physical needs resulting from the assault/abuse
- to test for infections and pregnancy
- to begin treatment if required
- to collect evidence
- to prevent undue worry later on.



When a victim/survivor goes to the emergency room at the QEII, IWK or Dartmouth General Hospital, and tells the medical personnel that she and/or he has been sexually assaulted, a SANE nurse will be called. She will be able to attend to victim/survivor's medical needs at this time, and if the victim/survivor chooses to have a forensic examination (evidence collection), the SANE nurse will conduct the examination.

**If you are not sure whether you'd like to report the sexual assault to the police SANE is able to freeze and save the forensic evidence for 6 months until you feel that you are in a position to decide.**

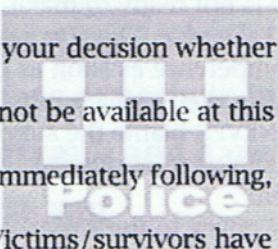
If you decide to go to the police:

If you are an adult, 16yrs of age and older, it is your decision whether to call the police and file a report or not.

You may ask for a female officer, but one may not be available at this time.

You can report the sexual assault at any time: immediately following, or years after the assault.

Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim. Victims/survivors have the right to be treated with dignity and respect at all times.



# WHAT TO DO IF:

someone you know has been sexually assaulted...

"When the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between the victim and the perpetrator. It is morally impossible to remain neutral in this conflict. The bystander is forced to take sides. It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the other hand, asks the bystander to share the burden or pain. The victim demands actions, engagement and remembering" (Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery, (1992): 78).

## DO:

- Remain calm and do not over react.
- Believe the survivor.
- If you are feeling uncomfortable discussing the details of the abuse, say so. Silence can be misunderstood as not caring or ignoring the survivor's pain.

## DON'T:

- Make promises you can't follow through on.
- Never, ever criticise the survivor for the choices she/he has made.
- Add to the survivor's stress levels.
- Force the survivor to talk about the assault/abuse.
- Never pressure the survivor to take action or make decisions she/he is not ready to make.
- Take over. The survivor needs to experience a sense of control and competence as soon as possible, give her/him every opportunity to make their own choices.
- NEVER blame the survivor. The perpetrator is 100% at fault.
- Minimize or dismiss what happened to the survivor as "no big deal".
- Convey to the survivor that they have been permanently damaged.
- Expect an immediate or complete recovery. Be as patient as you can

**S W E O C U O N N D D I A N R G Y**

Believing someone when they confide in you their experiences is EXTREMELY important to their healing

The reaction to victims/survivors at the time of the disclosure of their experience is very important, it has a direct impact on the healing process.

Blaming the victim/survivor on any level increases the victim's sense of self-blame and low self-esteem.

Both our self-identity and our world view are deeply affected following trauma at the hands of another person and particularly in the case of such an intrusive trauma as sexual abuse.

A recent study by the American Psychological Association found secondary wounding experiences rampant among victims of crime and violence. Some victims reported that their secondary wounding experiences were more painful and devastating than the original traumatic event.

Imagine how frustrating and devastating it is to have experienced the trauma of sexual assault and have no one believe you.

# AVALON SEXUAL



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The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is a feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault/abuse, and to change the current socio-political culture that fosters sexism, social injustice, and other forms of oppression. Avalon's mission is to provide services for those affected by sexual violence, with primary emphasis on support, education, counselling and leadership/advocacy services for women.

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Direct Services Provided by Avalon Include:

- Individual Counselling
- Support/ Therapy Groups
- Court Support
- Advocacy
- Emotional Support/Information/Referral
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program
- Immediate Sexual Assault Response Line

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Avalon's Services Are:

- for women 16 years of age and older (SANE's services are for women and men 13 years of age and older)
- for non-offending parents, partners and family members of women and children who have experienced sexual violence
- free of charge
- provided by professional staff

please feel free to call us regarding any questions about information, support and referral for male victims/survivors of sexual assault

# ASSAULT CENTRE

## SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER PROGRAM

The SANE Program is a partnership with the IWK Health Centre, the QEII Health Sciences Centre, and the Dartmouth General Hospital. Through this initiative, on-call SANEs will provide immediate care and conduct forensic examinations of victims of sexual violence.

The SANE Program provides:

- Emergency response to immediate sexual assaults (within 72 hours), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Response to the emergency departments of the IWK, QEII, and Dartmouth General Hospital.
- Services to both females and males, 13 years of age or older.
- Response Line for immediate sexual assaults (within the past 72 hours)
- Supportive follow up for victims and their families.
- Storage of forensic evidence for up to six months.

S.A.N.E

a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) is a Registered Nurse who has advanced training and education in forensic examinations of sexual assault victims.

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