

Sexual Assault Fact Sheet

1. Misconception: "Rape is a grown folks problem."

Reality: According to *Rape In America: A Report to the Nation*, it was found that "...rape in America is a tragedy of youth, with the majority of rape cases occurring during childhood and adolescence." Twenty-nine percent of victims were less than age 11, 32% occurred to kids between the ages of 11-17, and 22% for victims 18-24.

Productive Thinking: *"Sexual assault can happen to anyone of any age and to both females and males. By raising my awareness, I have taken a positive step toward preventing it from happening to me."*

2. Misconception: "Most rapes occur as a spur-of-the-moment act in a dark alley by a stranger."

Reality: About 82% of rapes are wholly or partially planned. Seventy-five percent of females in one study and 78% of rape victims in another were assaulted by someone they knew. This includes boyfriends and husbands.

Productive Thinking: *"I realize that in addition to being aware of strangers, I must recognize that people I know may pose a potential threat to me as well. With education on assault and abuse though, I can watch for signs that may place me at risk."*

3. Misconception: "Most rapes are interracial."

Reality: Rapists and their victims were likely to be of the same race (7 out of 10 for White victims; 8 out of 10 for Black).

Productive Thinking: *"I realize that there are incidents of interracial sexual assault, but to say that most of them are as such may be based more on racism than fact. I must realize that victimization occurs more among people who look alike than not."*

4. Misconception: "Rapes take place at night in unfamiliar territory."

Reality: According to the FBI, 36% of reported assaults occurred in or around the home of the victim. Other locations included commercial buildings, schools, parking lots and garages, and parks. Additionally, 34% occurred in broad daylight.

Productive Thinking: *"By recognizing that an assault may take place at anytime or anyplace, I can learn ways to secure different locations to lower risks of assaults."*

5. Misconception: "Rape is just rough or bad sex. What's the big deal?"

Reality: Almost half (49%) of the survivors were fearful of serious injury or death during a rape. Rape is a violent assault that is acted out sexually which affects an individual's sense of safety and control. Rape victims are nine times more likely than victims of other crimes to attempt suicide.

Productive Thinking: *"Even though rape is acted out sexually, I must remember that it is a violation and is about power and control. It has potentially life changing effects and should be taken very seriously."*

6. Misconception: "The rapist is someone who is sexually unfulfilled or can't get sex."

Reality: According to a New Jersey prison study, all of the rapists studied had available sexual relationships at the time of the rape. In another study, 67% of convicted rapists were repeat offenders.

Productive Thinking: *"Sexual fulfillment is not the entire motivation for sexual assault. Once again, it is a need to exert power and control over another."*

Sexual Assault Fact Sheet continued...

7. Misconception: "Girls ask for it by the way they dress or act."

Reality: "Provocative behavior" is usually defined by a male standard. In Victorian times, showing the ankle was considered provocative.

Productive Thinking: *"Dressing in attractive ways or indicating to someone that you like them is not an invitation to be sexually assaulted."*

8. Misconception: "It's okay for a guy to force a girl to have sex with her if she makes him excited."

Reality: This attitude suggests that guys are not capable of controlling themselves and it is her fault that he cannot do so. It further suggests that females must ultimately bear the responsibility and actions of male sexual urges.

Productive thinking: *"If I engage in sexual intimacy, I cannot force or coerce my partner into doing anything, and, I must take responsibility for my own actions. If I chose not to participate, my partner's sexual urges are not my responsibility."*

9. Misconception: "It's okay for a guy to force a girl to have sex with her if he pays for everything on a date."

Reality: This attitude suggests that dating is an exchange of sex for money. On the streets this is known as prostitution. It further suggests guys plan on having sex with their dates whether their dates want to or not – planned rapes.

Productive Thinking: *"Since there are both males and females who think this way, I might want to discuss finances as well as intentions with my dates beforehand."*

10. Misconception: "Girls only cry rape to get back at a guy they are mad at."

Reality: False rape charges are not frequently made; only about 2.5% of all rape charges are determined to be false – the same percentages of other felonies. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that as many as 85% of all rapes go unreported.

Productive Thinking: *"Because of the way society treats rape victims, most people would not put themselves in a position to be ridiculed, demeaned, and subject to public scrutiny if it were not true."*