

# Understanding Sexual Assault

## What is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault is any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape.

## Everyone Is Affected by Sexual Violence

- Every 73 seconds another American is sexually assaulted.
- 1 out of every 6 American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her life time (14.8% completed, 2.8% attempted).
- About 3% of American men—or 1 in 33—have experienced an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime.
- From 2009-2013, Child Protective Services agencies substantiated, or found strong evidence to indicate that, 63,000 children a year were victims of sexual abuse.
- A majority of child victims are 12-17. Of victims under the age of 18: 34% of victims of sexual assault and rape are under age 12, and 66% of victims of sexual assault and rape are age 12-17.

## After Sexual Assault

After sexual assault, it's hard to know how to react. You may be physically hurt, emotionally drained, or unsure what to do next. You may be considering working with the criminal justice system, but are unsure of where to start. Learning more about what steps you can take following sexual violence can help ground you in a difficult time.

## Recovering from Sexual Violence

Recovering from sexual assault or abuse is a process, and that process looks different for everyone. It may take weeks, months, or years: there's no timetable for healing. Here are some resources to help you navigate the process.

## For Survivors

### How Can Therapy Help?

If you decide to seek support from a therapist after sexual assault or abuse, you may have some questions. That's perfectly normal. Working with a therapist can help you deal with some of the challenges you may be facing.

### Safety Planning

Brainstorming ways to stay safe may help reduce the risk of future harm.

### Telling Loved Ones About Sexual Assault

It can be hard to talk about an experience with sexual violence, and sometimes it may feel most daunting to bring it up with people you are closest to. Here are a few questions you may want to ask yourself before telling someone, tips to help prepare for the conversation, and ways to cope with unhelpful reactions if they occur.

### Self-Care After Trauma

Whether it happened recently or years ago, self-care can help you cope with the short- and long-term effects of a trauma like sexual assault.



## For Loved Ones

### Tips for Talking with Survivors of Sexual Assault

It's not always easy to know what to say when someone tells you they've been sexually assaulted, especially if they are a friend or family member.

### Help Someone You Care About

There are many ways that you can help a friend or family member who has been affected by sexual violence.

### Self-Care for Friends and Family

There is no normal or "right" way to react when you find out that someone you care about has survived an act of sexual violence. Regardless of what you're feeling, these emotions can be intense and difficult to deal with.

### Help for Parents of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused by Family Members

It's important to find a way to manage your feelings, so you can focus on creating a safe environment for your child that is free from harm, judgment, and blame.

## Sexual Assault FAQ's

### What Is Consent?

Consent is informed, freely and actively given, mutually understandable words or actions that indicate a willingness to participate in a mutually agreed upon sexual activity. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or if you are unconscious or asleep—you cannot consent to sex.

### My Spouse/Partner Forces Me To Perform Sexual Acts I Do Not Want

Anytime a spouse/partner forces you to do any unwanted sexual acts, that is considered spousal/marital rape.

### I'm Here In The U.S. Undocumented, What Can I Do?

If you are/were a victim of sexual assault, but are/were here undocumented, know you still have rights. You cannot be deported if you report sexual assault to law enforcement.

### What is the Difference Between Rape and Sexual Assault?

Rape is defined as unwanted penetration, whether that is oral, anal, or vaginal. Sexual assault refers to:

- Any unwanted sexual contact, including fondling or molestation.
- Penetration of the victim's body by any body part or foreign object, also known as rape
- Attempted rape
- Child molestation and incest
- Unwanted sexual touching or fondling

### How Can I Keep My Children Safe?

Have open COMMUNICATION. Reassure them they will be okay, they are not in trouble, and that it is NOT their FAULT! EDUCATE them about good touch and bad touch. BELIEVE THEM if they ever say someone touched them. KNOW the name, address, and number of the people taking care of your children. KNOW the SIGNS, such as changes in behavior, bed wetting, change in personal hygiene, or hypersexuality.

**For more information on how to help our sexual assault survivors you may contact our 24-hour Helpline at 1-800-575-5352.**

