

## IF YOU'VE BEEN ASSAULTED...

The psychological trauma caused by sexual assault can be severe and long lasting, or may temporarily affect your mood, concentration, academics, relationships, or physiology. Many KSU students have found it useful to speak with the Women's Center advocate. The advocate provides information and referrals, and will explore options and possibilities that are right for you. The K-State Women's Center is located in Holton 206 and is a SAFEZONE for female and male students. We are open from 8 to 5, but in an emergency the advocate can be reached by calling the KSU police (2-6412) and asking for the Women's Center advocate.

To speak to the advocate, you can call the Women's Center at 532-6444 and set an appointment, or you can email Mary at [mtodd@ksu.edu](mailto:mtodd@ksu.edu), or you can just drop by the Women's Center. Holton Hall is just south of Hale Library, east of Eisenhower Hall. Your conversations at the Women's Center will be confidential. Information about legal and police intervention, medical and therapeutic issues, and academic and university assistance is available. There's no need to begin the healing process alone; we are here to support you in any way you need.

### Common Reactions to Sexual Assault:

**Shock and disbelief:** *"I feel numb." "I can't believe this happened to me." "I feel disconnected from other people and from my life."* Initially, most sexual assault victims react with shock and disbelief. You may feel numb and dazed, withdrawn and distant from other people. You may want to forget about what happened and avoid people or situations that remind you of the assault.

**Remembering what happened and what it felt like:** *"Sometimes, I can't stop thinking about it." "For weeks, I couldn't wash away his smell." "It comes back out of nowhere. I feel like it's happening all over again."* There may also be periods when you are preoccupied with thoughts and feelings about the assault. You may have unwanted memories or flashbacks and nightmares. When you think

about what happened, you might reexperience some of the sensations and feelings you had during the assault, such as fear and powerlessness.

**Intense emotions:** *"I feel very sad, like I lost a part of me." "I have this intense anger that I never felt before."* Many survivors experience intense emotions in the aftermath of a sexual assault. At times, you may feel angry. You may also feel anxious or depressed.

**Physical symptoms:** *"I couldn't sleep through the night. I had trouble falling asleep and then I would wake up every night at the same time that the rape happened."* Some victims have physical symptoms, such as sleep disturbances, headaches, and stomachaches. You may find that it is very difficult to concentrate on

routine activities. You may also experience changes in your sexuality, such as a loss of interest in sex or avoidance of sexual situations.

**Feeling fearful:** *"Every night when I come home, I search my apartment. I look in the closets and under the bed to be sure no one is there." "I can't go out alone at night because I am too scared."* Fears about personal safety are an almost universal response to a sexual assault. Survivors often become fearful in situations and places where they were never frightened before. In many sexual assault situations, the victim feels powerless and/or terrified of being killed or seriously harmed. Afterwards, you may continue to feel frightened and vulnerable for a while.

**Self-blame and shame:** *"I felt like it was my fault, I trusted him..." "I wondered if guys would think I was damaged goods."* Feelings of guilt and shame are also frequent reactions. Because of misconceptions about rape, victims may blame themselves, doubt their own judgment, or wonder if they were in some way responsible for the assault. Feelings of guilt and self-blame may be reinforced by the reactions of others, who, because of prevalent myths about rape, may blame the victim or criticize his or her behavior. You may also feel ashamed. Some victims describe feeling dirty, devalued, and humiliated as a result of a sexual assault. Feelings of shame are sometimes a reaction to being forced by the assailant to participate in the crime. **REMEMBER-RAPE IS A CRIME AND IT IS NEVER YOUR FAULT.**

# What To Do After a Sexual Assault

**Be sure to get medical attention immediately.** After an assault it is vitally important to receive a medical exam and to consult a nurse or doctor about health-related issues, even if there are no visible physical wounds. **If you feel you may have been drugged, urine should be COLLECTED IMMEDIATELY. Date rape drugs disappear quickly from the body.**

**Call the police:** If there is any chance you will want to give the police information, help prevent further assaults, take the perpetrator to court, seek justice, or at any time press charges or go on record with your assault, the sooner you talk to the police, the better. Evidence is lost as time goes by.

**Get support from other people:** Some rape victims feel that if they avoid talking about the assault, they will be able to forget about what happened to them. Most survivors who try this approach eventually realize that they need to deal with the assault. Their unresolved feelings and fears hold them back from enjoying their lives and participating fully in relationships. Talking about the assault can help relieve some of the control it has over you and help you begin the process of recovery. Therapy provides a safe, private place to deal with your feelings and concerns. It also can be helpful to talk about your reactions with friends and family members who are supportive and understanding.

**Talk with a counselor.** *"Therapy saved my life." "I'm stronger than he is." "I wasn't going to be his victim forever."* Many sexual assault victims find that therapy is a healing and empowering experience. A person trained to assist sexual assault victims will understand the unique concerns you have and know ways to help you cope with the physical and emotional effects of the assault. The right counselor can also help you deal with the reactions of family members and friends. The advocate at the KSU Women's Center can help you locate a therapist. You can also find a therapist by contacting the KSU Counseling Services (532-6927), or by looking in the yellow pages under rape or women's services. You can also call RAINN, a national victim assistance organization, at 1-800-656-HOPE. RAINN will connect you to a rape crisis center in your area. Most rape crisis centers offer free services to sexual assault victims.

**Report the Crime**—Even if only confidentially to the Women's Center.

**Consider legal action.** You can discuss the possibilities of the legal process with the Women's Center Advocate, and obtain referrals to experienced attorneys.

**Help make campus acquaintance-rape visible.** Consider using the University Policy Prohibiting Sexual Violence. (<http://www.ksu.edu/studentlife/SexPolicy.html>). We will help.

**Tell your story**—confidentially, anonymously, or publicly—through writing, voice-taping, or art. We will assist you.

**EACH PERSON IS DIFFERENT....IT TAKES TIME TO FEEL BETTER--** *"One minute I feel okay and I think I can deal with what happened, and then the next minute I feel overwhelmed and weak. Sometimes it seems like it will never go away." "It's been 8 months since my rape. It's still always there, but I don't think about it every day anymore."* Each person is unique. Although many victims experience similar reactions, there are still individual differences in how they respond to the trauma of rape. You may experience a few or many symptoms, either immediately or weeks or even months later.

Remember—**It is the healthy, competent, wise individual who seeks assistance!**  
Getting help after being assaulted is a sign that a real and lasting healing process has begun.

Much information above is from the Rape Treatment Center, UCLA Medical Center. <http://www.911rape.org/request/index.html>

