



December 2011 Newsletter

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Acquaintance Rape: A Matter of Consent

By Dr. Amy Menna & Gift From Within

Rape. It is powerful for a power hungry act. It breeds fear and in many cases, it breeds silence. It is important that this silence be broken, and survivors be heard. By doing so, we break the grasp that rape has upon so many. The aftermath can immense. The journey to heal may be terrifying; the steps, long and tedious. By building a bridge of awareness and empowerment, women and men who have experience rape can be healed and heard.

The journey to recovery starts with awareness. Awareness not only of what rape is, but the repercussion that grow deep into the soil of someone's soul. Rape may have the roots of power, control, and fear. Yet cultivating the earth, empowerment grows. It is amazing what survivors can do under nurturing conditions. It is our responsibility to cultivate the innate wisdom that so many survivors have. It is equally important that we develop our own. Rape is not an issue solely for survivors. It is an issue for everyone.

When someone takes something without someone's consent it is theft. When someone crosses sexual boundaries without consent, it is rape. Rape recovery starts with awareness of the problem including the nature of the definition. In defining rape, we can deepen our awareness of what the problem including the nature of the definition of rape is the beginning of healing; and the beginning of the definition is consent. *Consent: To give approval. Capable, deliberate, and voluntary agreement.* Sexual contact without consent is rape. It doesn't matter what you're doing, wearing, or what has happened in the past. It is rape when someone disregards your will and violates your sexual and physical boundaries. It is about assault, it is about power, and it needs to be spoken about.

The term *Date Rape* was coined to describe non-consensual sexual contact between two or more people on a "date". This term, however, does not encompass what many women and men experience. In fact over 80% of survivors know their assailant and may or may not be on a date. As such, this article will not only refer to date rape, but also to acquaintance rape. Doing so broadens the scope of violence and more adequately portrays the problem.

Hannah was a freshman in college when she joined a sorority. Being in a sorority meant she went to parties at the fraternities. One night, the fraternity had a party with her sorority. She had a couple drinks but was certainly not drunk as she was careful to not "let loose" in front of such a big audience.

Chris was a junior and belonged to the fraternity. He and Hannah have known each other for a while and even flirted on some occasions. That night, he was paying her a great deal of attention. She thought nothing of it. Although he was a nice guy, she wasn't that attracted to him. Around midnight the party was still going and Chris had asked Hannah if she would come back to his room because he wanted to "show her something." Out of curiosity, Hannah agreed.

As they entered the room, Chris leaned over to kiss her. At first she was surprised, and tentatively responded. For a brief moment she kissed him before pulling away and suggesting that they go back to the party. At that point he tried to kiss her again. She said "no" but pushed her on the bed anyway. He then proceeded to rip off her underwear and rape her.

Event for the Month

Male Bystander Intervention Training

8 December @ 0900-1030

Location: Building 87, Room 125
TRS Conference Room

Happy Holidays

Continue:

After he was done, he threw her underwear back at her and said "I will see you downstairs." After about an hour, Hannah got up, went downstairs and walked straight out of the party. Everyone was so caught up in a drinking game so they didn't even notice her leave.

She went back to her dorm room. After a few hours, the physical pain between her legs didn't go away. She finally realized she needed to go to the hospital. While there, she denied rape counseling, a rape kit, or any involvement with the police.

Hannah was raped so violently that she was still bleeding. In fact, they had to use forceps to get the tampon out which was lodged inside of her. After a few hours at the hospital, she went back to her dorm room.

The next day, she contemplated telling someone but was afraid no one would believe her or they would blame her because she had a couple drinks. Chris was well known and liked as he was the president of the fraternity. It would be her word against his.

After a few days, she began to wonder about "her part" in what happened. She started to tell herself that it wouldn't have happened if she hadn't gone with him. Nor did she think it would have happened if she hadn't entertained his kisses, even if only a few seconds. She then rationalized to herself that it wasn't "that bad" and maybe she was over reacting.

Defining Your Experience

Many survivors, like Hannah, fear that they will not be believed if they say they were raped. In Hannah's case, there was prior sexual contact. However, she had put up the boundary and said "no" numerous times. Sexual violation of boundaries beyond the word "no" is rape. Many survivors believe that they are at fault for going somewhere with the assailant or being intoxicated. All these thoughts clutter the survivor's mind and can ultimately influence her view as to whether or not she had been raped.

Each sexual assault is unique. This is also true about how rape or sexual assault is defined. There are many differences among survivors and their definition of rape. This leaves many individuals to deny their experience. Many do not "count it" as rape because it did not fit certain predetermined definitions.

Rape has been defined primarily by lack of consent. However, there are numerous other aspects in defining rape. Some individuals focus on the physical aspect or violation, others focus on the mental anguish that goes along with it. Words associated with it may be different (i.e. power, control, anger, aggression), yet the idea behind them is the same. Rape is an intrusive act upon one's physical and sexual boundaries. Therefore, any sexual contact without consent is rape.

Rape is portrayed on television that most sexual assaults involve a great deal of violence. Some survivors believe that their experience was not rape because it excluded some perceived key elements such as a weapon or further physical abuse. Rape may not include physical violence, a weapon, or a stranger. In fact many do not.

Resources

SAPR OFFICE
580 481-7428/7835

Family Advocacy Program
580 481-5376

ACMI House
580 482-3800

Chaplin
580 481-7485

OKC Rape Crisis Center
800-522-7233

National Sexual Assault Hotline
800-656-HOPE

Hurt One... Effects All...

Preventing Sexual Assault is

Everyones Duty!