

Date Rape! Sexual Assault! YOU CAN SAY, “NO”!

It has been said that more women are sexually assaulted by men they know than by strangers. Many of these assaults occur in the course of a date (social meeting, dinner engagement, etc.) where both parties are present because they want to be. The initial contact between a perpetrator and their potential victim occurs in a social and non-threatening setting.

A rapist/perpetrator commits their crime due to the need to gain **power and control** over another person. When the perpetrator knows the victim, this allows them to get the victim in a vulnerable situation without causing immediate alarm.

There are **three** recognized phases leading up to an assault in a date rape/sexual assault incident. Recognizing these phases leading to an assault, setting boundaries, and making those boundaries known early in the date, the victim can learn to recognize the “symptoms” of sexual assault.

Phase 1: Intrusion

The perpetrator begins to violate your space in small ways. This may be in the form of unwanted touching, looks, or conversation about personal topics that you feel uneasy or uncomfortable discussing. This is not usually very threatening, but uncomfortable.

Phase 2: Desensitization

In this phase, you have become accustomed to the intrusions and you begin to think that this is just the way they are going to be; it’s their personality. You may not like the way the intrusive person is acting, but you put up a “shield” and try not to be bothered by these intrusive acts. Note! It does not have to be this way!

Phase 3: Boundaries

In order to gain control, you must learn to make decisions based on what you want, decide what your personal boundaries and limits are, and be verbal and assertive in expressing those limits when they are violated.

DANGER SIGNS

- A date who does not listen and ignores your requests, this person does not care whether or not they have your consent for physical intimacy or touching.
- A date that gets angry when you set your limits, this is a date that does not believe you have a right to set limits on his behavior or needs.
- A date who deliberately and repeatedly violates the limits you have set, is a date you may now be in a situation, in which you cannot do anything about, or are afraid to try.

WHAT TO DO

- The minute you realize that some of these danger signs are present, you must take preventative steps.
- State your limits! Do not just say “no”. Tell them specifically what you do not want them to do, say, or touch.
- Be direct and honest and tell them the things that are making you uncomfortable.
- If this does not stop them, or if they are one of those people who does not recognize your right to set limits and boundaries on their behavior, you need to end the date IMMEDIATELY.
- If they have ignored your requests and continue to accelerate their behavior, they violate your “safe zone”, and YOU ARE NOW A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.
- Report this offense. It does not matter if it was just touching before you were able to get away or whether their behavior became more violent contact.

PREVENTION

If you plan to have a social life, there are obvious risks involved. This is a time to be responsible and take actions before your first date. It helps to learn all you can about the person you are dating or getting involved with. Check their social media accounts. Talk to their friends. Double-date for your first few dates. If this person shows any danger signs while in the company of others, you should never go with them alone. A person that shows no respect in the presence of other company, will most likely not show you any respect when you are with them alone. Limits and boundaries will mean nothing to them and this is a serious factor.

Date rape and sexual assault does not always happen on the first date. Often a person will groom their victim to develop a level of trust. Regardless of what you call it or when it happens, it is still a sexual assault. Report this incident to police.