

You Can Say No!

Date Rape

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 rapist and his potential victim occurs in a social and non-threatening setting.

Just as other rapists, the date rapist commits his crime due to the need he has to gain control of another person. Some date rapists commit the assault out of anger, but the majority does so to gain power and control over their victim.

The assaulter prefers to know the potential victim. This allows him to get his victim in a vulnerable situation without causing alarm. As a result of this closeness and the social aspect of their situation, the victim is often unable to identify the danger until it is too late.

There are three recognized phases leading up to an assault in a date rape situation. By recognizing the three phases and setting personal boundaries and making them known, the potential victim can learn to recognize the “symptoms” of date rape.

Phase 1: Intrusion

The suspect 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 he is going to be. You may not like the way the intrusive person is acting, but you put up a “shield” and try not to be bothered by his intrusive acts.

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 then be assertive in expressing those limits when they are violated.

Danger Signals

A date who does not listen and ignores your limits – this person does not care whether or not he has your consent for physical intimacy.

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 – 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 signals are present, *you must take preventative steps.*

State your limits; do not just say “no”. Tell the date specifically what you do not want him to do, say, or touch. Address the things that are making you uncomfortable. If this does not stop him or if he is one of those people who does not recognize your right to set limits on behavior, you need to end the date **NOW.**

If you state your limits and he continues and accelerates his physical violation of your “security zone” (your personal space), **YOU ARE NOW A VICTIM OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.**

Report his offense, whether it is just touching before you get away, or whether he continues to more violent contact.

If you plan to have a social life, there are obvious risks involved. It helps to know more about that new man in your life before you go out with him alone. ***This is one of the times you must take some responsibility for your actions in advance.*** If he exhibits any of the known danger signals while in the company of others, you should *not* go out with him alone. He is not going to change if he has ignored your limits while still in a group.

Date rape does not always happen on the first date. It can happen at any time in a relationship, by anyone with whom you have become acquainted and in whom you have developed a limited trust.

Regardless of what you call it or when it happens, it is a sexual assault.

For more information, contact:

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