

Sexual violence is incredibly difficult to heal from no matter what happened during the assault, but being forced to give or receive oral rape can add complications to an already difficult process.

## **Oral Rape: Giving**

By Jackie

One of the most challenging aspects of my rape was being forced to perform oral sex on my rapist. Unlike vaginal rape, it can be difficult coming to terms with feeling like an active participant in the abuse. While we know we didn't want it, we still see ourselves doing it, even though it wasn't a consensual act. This participation brings on a level of shame that can often feel unbearable.

The challenge in healing stems from a variety of issues. First, there is general embarrassment that comes from discussing oral sex. It is often the topic of many jokes, but it is not typically a conversation for "polite" company. This made discussing it very difficult and compounded the shame I felt.

Another issue is the misconception of how one can be forced to perform oral sex. While I was fortunate to have an incredible support system, they sometimes seemed to require an explanation as to how this could occur, which just exacerbated my shame. Although others may not be able to understand, it is of course possible to be forced to perform oral sex.

I needed to maintain the control that was taken during the oral rape and I found myself feeling very guarded about what I put in my mouth. In addition to the more obvious healing issues, there are also triggers that arise from eating certain foods that are phallic such as a bananas, ice cream or lollipops. At times, daily routines such as brushing my teeth can bring back memories or cause feelings of discomfort. Trips to the dentist also became a struggle.

Being able to connect with other survivors has been a great benefit. I no longer feel alone in my pain which is something that has helped the shame subside greatly. I now realize that there is no such thing as participation in rape. By definition, our choice was removed.

## Oral Rape: Receiving

By Jes

When my neighbor snuck into my bed while I was sleeping, he woke me up by performing oral sex on me. Facing this part of my rape has been incredibly challenging. For a long time, I remained silent about it, not ever mentioning it when I told my story and leaving it off of my website entirely. Eventually, I realized that I was carrying shame that did not belong to me and wrote about the oral rape on my website. I didn't know how healing it would be; I received email after email from women who had also been forced to receive oral rape and felt so much less alone and realized that others also struggled with the same issues I had.

Part of my shame came from knowing that he had touched me in a very intimate way, while I also felt that by lying there, I had somehow been complicit in the act. It took me time to accept that even though I hadn't struggled or fought through this part, I had not consented, nor had I even been given a chance to consent, which is what defines rape.

Talking about it was still incredibly difficult, though. Our genitals are private and we do not talk about them. It was hard enough to say that I had been raped, but I cringed at the idea of painting a too-vivid picture in my supporters' minds by using the words "oral rape." When I shared what happened to me on my website, I learned that other people had suffered through the same thing, which helped to eradicate some of the shame I felt. I still don't usually share this detail when I am telling new friends and acquaintances about my rape, which is a matter of personal choice; I don't share a lot of the details of what happened. I often share it with other survivors, though. I don't want anyone to feel as alone as I did.

Healing sexually definitely presented a challenge. I sometimes still feel vulnerable when my husband gives me oral sex. We have had frank conversations about it. He knows never to wake me up this way and understands why. It has also helped me to use grounding techniques before and during oral sex. When we are kissing, I look at him and remind myself that I am with a man who loves me, who would never hurt me and while he is doing it, I often touch his hair.

In my opinion, receiving oral sex is definitely a part of sex that I am happy I reclaimed! It might take work, but it can be done with the support of a loving partner and honest, open dialogue.

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