

Myth:

“Survivors should get over the rape quickly.”

Fact: Nearly every survivor is left with trauma that extends far beyond the actual incident. Most common are post-traumatic stress disorder, rape trauma syndrome, anxiety disorders, panic attacks, depression, eating disorders, self injury, and thoughts of suicide.

Myth:

“If rape is not physically resisted, it is not rape.”

Fact: Humans and all animals have three responses to danger. We either fight, freeze, or flee. Many people fearing for their lives or bodily integrity freeze. There is no choice in that reaction. It's just what happens. A person need not physically resist rape. If they do not consent or are unconscious or intoxicated and cannot consent, it's rape. Against a person's will is against the law. Rape is potentially life-threatening. Whatever a person does to survive the assault is the appropriate action.

Myth:

“It is impossible for a husband to sexually assault his wife.”

Fact: Regardless of marital or social relationship, if a woman does not consent to sexual activity, she is being sexually assaulted. In fact, 14% of women are victims of rape committed by their husband.

Myth:

“Rape is a woman's problem.”

Fact: Rape is everyone's problem. Men are often victims too. Very generally speaking, it is also men who are the rapists, and they need to learn to take responsibility for their actions. The justice system needs to make changes that place the assailant, not the victim, on trial. Society needs to reject the misogyny that is present in the media and is ingrained in our families, schools, and government. We need to reject rape-glorifying entertainment and jokes. We all need to take responsibility for rape and sexual abuse.

Myth:

“Some people are just biologically driven to rape.”

Fact: People do not rape because they want sexual gratification. They rape to overpower. We're going to be frank here. Masturbation provides sexual release and does not turn a person into a criminal. A lot of people choose that option, rather than becoming criminals.

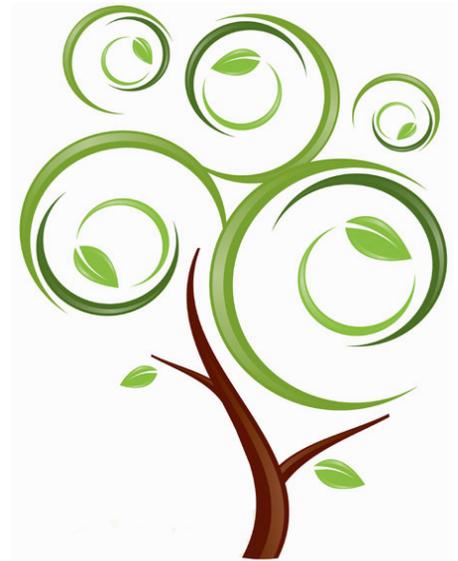
Myth:

“It is easy to prosecute a rapist.”

Fact: In 1991, at least 7,881 new rape cases were brought to Minnesota rape crisis centers. In the same year, 1,944 cases were reported to law enforcement agencies, but only 311 offenders were incarcerated for criminal sexual conduct in MN.

What is Sexual Assault?

Myths and Facts



A handout for survivors

Developed by Pandora's Project

www.PandorasProject.org
www.pandys.org

Myth:

"Women who are drunk are willing to engage in any kind of sexual activity."

Fact: The fact that a woman has been drinking does not imply consent. Alcohol and drugs can render a woman incapable of consent.

Myth:

"Only young, pretty women are assaulted."

Fact: Survivors range in age from infancy to old age, and their appearance is seldom a consideration. Assailants often choose victims who seem most vulnerable to attack: old persons, children, physically or emotionally disabled persons, substance abusers and street persons. Men are also attacked.

Myth:

"Women who dress provocatively deserve to be raped."

Fact: The words "dress provocatively" can be replaced with any number of different words, like "are intoxicated," "flirt with men," or "hitchhike." The truth is that no one deserves to be raped, no matter what they were doing. It is not up to someone to avoid being raped. It is the obligation of people to decide not to rape. Most rapes are planned. Research shows that rapists are looking for available, vulnerable targets - not women who dress in a particular way. No person asks to be hurt or degraded.

Myth:

"Only sexy looking women are raped."

Fact: This myth exists because people view rape as a sexually motivated crime. Again, it is not. Rape is a crime of power, perpetrated by people who find gratification in overpowering. It doesn't matter how sexy or attractive the victim is perceived as being.

Myth:

"Women 'cry' rape."

Fact: Only two percent of reported rape and related sex offences are false (which is approximately the same rate of false reports for other crimes). Although many cases are dropped because of insufficient evidence for conviction, this should not be confused with false reporting.

Myth:

"If a woman is raped, she might as well sit back and enjoy it."

Fact: This myth allows men to feel that rape is permissible, but it is patently false. Survivors of sexual assault usually find that damage has been done to their view of the world and their views of themselves as a result of the way someone has taken control of their bodies. Again, no one likes to be left without choices, especially when bodily integrity is violated.

Myth:

"Gang rape is rare."

Fact: More than 40% of cases involve more than one assailant.

Myth:

"Sexual assault is a crime of passion and lust."

Fact: Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Assailants seek to overpower their victims. Rape is a violent assault that is acted out sexually. It violates not only the victim's personal integrity, but also his/her sense of safety and control over his/her life.

Myth:

"Rapists are usually strangers."

Fact: 80% of assaults involve acquaintances.

Myth:

"Women secretly want to be raped."

Fact: It is not uncommon for women to have rape fantasies. However, we believe that this is a result of women feeling that expressing their sexuality openly is bad, mainly due to societal beliefs. Some people may fantasize about rape in order to express their sexual desires, while feeling as though they are not "bad." But no one likes to be overpowered, with their choices taken away. Ever.

Myth:

"Normal men don't rape. I would be able to tell if someone was a rapist just by talking to him."

Fact: Most rapists seem normal to their friends, families and co-workers. They just hold people in low regard and do not understand or do not care about the consequences of their actions.