

DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF NON-STRANGER RAPE

Be alert and sensitive to the traits of your companions. Observe how s/he relates with people and whether this differs significantly from how s/he relates to you. Does this person make disparaging remarks about other people? Does this person respect other people's feelings? Does this person set double standards? Does this person possess a submissive or oppressive view or behavior toward women? These indicators could give you a general idea of who well this person will respect you and your limits.

Know who is likely to engage in rape. The following are characteristics of college male date rapists: immaturity; irresponsibility in terms of school work; drinking; lack of social conscience; engaging in delinquent or anti-social behaviors; force in seeking sexual gratification; and possessing beliefs that women are manipulative or not trustworthy.

Know yourself. By knowing your values and wishes, you can prevent verbal coercion; the popular tactic used by date rapists in seeking unwanted sexual contact. If you are not sure of your sexual values, seek counseling to sort them out. Evaluate your past relationships and use these insights to establish goals in your current relationships. For example, what do you want out of your present relationship-companionship, friendship, intimacy, and/or sex?

Be aware of your sexual feelings and accept them. Males have no more biological need for sex than females. Sexual arousal is a normal and often involuntary response in both males and females. However, acting on these feelings is a completely separate issue. If you don't want to engage in intercourse, tell this to your companion firmly and loudly, and say that your reasons are personal (after all, you have the right to say no and not explain your actions).

Be aware of your tolerance to alcohol. It is important to familiarize yourself with your level of tolerance to alcohol. Then remember to stay within these limits.

Develop strong communication and assertiveness skills. Communication becomes a major factor in reducing the risk of unwanted contact or sex. Your verbal and non-verbal communication efforts should coincide with your desires. Many times mixed signals result in unwanted intercourse or rape. Men and women may perceive various messages differently. For example, a young woman wants to be sexy so she dresses sexy. The message she wants to send is "I am sexy." A man, however, may see her and misconstrue her appearance as a signal for "I want sex."

Set limits and firmly communicate these to your date. Do not let your date enter your “personal space” or overstep the physical boundaries you have set for yourself. If being assertive is a problem for you, then take an assertiveness training class, or contact a counseling center or support group to learn this skill. It is important that you learn assertiveness since the second most common tactic used by date rapists is to ignore protests.

Be part of a group and/or stay in public areas close to other people. If you wish to talk in private, you should strive for auditory privacy but always remain visible to other people – so if you have to scream you could be heard.

- Think before consenting to visit a date’s bedroom or apartment. Be especially cautious in entering or remaining in a room alone with a companion.
- Be cautious in a room that has a stereo or television turned up loud especially if the door has been locked—people may not hear and react to your screams.
- Remember to carry money to pay your own way. Such actions will help avoid “feelings of obligation” that you place on yourself and/or have been imposed on you by a companion.
- Be on guard at the end of a date—many rapes occur then, and many times within the victim’s own room or apartment.
- Before each activity, determine how you are going to get home. For instance, is public transportation an option, and if so, what time does it cease service? Is a friend available to give you a ride in an emergency (and do you have his/her phone number with you)?
- Pay attention to the route taken to your destination, particularly if you are riding home with a friend or acquaintance. Do not tolerate questionable deviations, especially to desolate areas.
- Know self-defense tactics and practice them with your friends. A surprise physical retaliation, such as biting, jabbing fingers in the eyes, or kneeling in the groin may give you quick control in a potentially dangerous situation.

Remember:

No Matter What You Choose To Do or Not To Do, It’s NOT Your Fault!