

Sexual Assault

Rape has existed ever since the appearance of man and woman on this earth. Women are the victims and can be raped at any age, any time, and any place. For the majority of their lives they carry around a universal fear. There are no certain types of women who are raped, likewise there are no certain types of men who rape.

Women all over the world, of every race, age, colour, and every creed live in fear of being raped. They live in fear of this physical and emotional violation. They are told and taught, time-after-time, ever since parents first tell them about sex, that there are dangerous people and situations 'out there', and as young girls they soon begin to realize that they have little or no control over this danger.

Some women, who suffer from the fear of rape, may not become mature, self suffi-

cent adults; they may escape to compulsive pairing and/ or marriage for protection.

The last phase is where resolution takes place and the victim is on the road to being restored to her previous level of functioning.

Phase two includes nightmares particularly those in which the rape itself is relived.

Continued support is necessary for those victims whose case will be taken to court and tried. The trial can be an even more traumatic experience for the victim as the rape is relived once more on the stand in front of people the victim does not know.

Rape is a terrible crime. Any compensation, whether that be a successful conviction or a monetary fine, does not remove the long-lasting effects of physical injury nor the emotional dysfunction that accompanies rape.

Susan Brownmiller in her book, *Against Our Will*, believes that women allowed themselves to become the property of one man to protect themselves from many men. However, this

marriage did not guarantee freedom from abuse. Husbands rape, too!!!

The myth persists that women enjoy and want to be raped. The truth is that men are the aggressors and the pursuers while women are the pursued.

A woman who has been raped feels outraged, violated, dirty, used, often guilty, and during the rape attack itself, she is most fearful for her life.

Rape is a traumatic experience which results in a crisis. The rape can be so overwhelming that the victim's normal coping mechanisms become affected.

Victims go through various post-phases. Phase one includes nausea, inability to sleep or fitful sleep, and inability to keep food down.

Some time ago there appeared in *The Evening Patriot* an article on and about a crisis centre that is located in Calgary. The crisis centre is for victims of sexual assault.

Debbie Bruckner, a 25 year-old woman from the area is the executive director of the centre. Her main concern is for the victims. She and about 50 volunteers along with four other paid staff members operate a 24-hour-

a-day crisis line. This serves all victims of sexual assault, recent or past. Counselling and escort service to the hospital and to court, (if the victim chooses to go) are also provided. The centre also does follow up counselling.

Another of her concerns was that of public education. This was done largely by speaking to groups such as service clubs, professional groups, and schools.

Here, on Prince Edward Island a group of 5 women are busily putting together a crisis centre (in Charlottetown), for victims of sexual assault. It is hoped that it will provide counselling and advice to the victims and the potential victims of assault.

If this centre is successful then we are on the way to a much more promising future here on the Island for the assault victim and the potential victims.

Let's give the Rape Crisis Centre Planning Group our support!!!



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