

Sexual Assaults - Myths (vs) Reality

There are many myths about why sexual assaults occur. If one understands the myths versus the realities of sexual assault, the opportunity for one occurring can be reduced.

MYTH

Sexual assault is a crime of passion and lust.

REALITY

Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Assailants seek to dominate, humiliate and punish their victims.

MYTH

You cannot be assaulted against your will.

REALITY

Assailants overpower their victim with the threat of violence or with actual violence. In cases of acquaintance rape or incest, an assailant often uses the victim's trust of the assailant to isolate the victim.

MYTH

A person who has really been assaulted will be hysterical.

REALITY

Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to the assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, guilt, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way.

MYTH

Sexual assault is an impulsive act.

REALITY

Seventy-five (75%) percent of all assaults are planned in advance. When three or more assailants are involved, 90% are planned. If two assailants are involved, 83%. With one assailant, 58% are planned.

MYTH

Assailants are usually crazed psychopaths who do not know their victims.

REALITY

As many as 80% of all assaults involve either a known acquaintance, or someone the victim has had contact with, but does not know personally.

MYTH

Gang rape is rare.

REALITY

In 43% of all reported cases, more than one assailant was involved.

MYTH

Many women claim they have been sexually assaulted because they want revenge upon the man they accuse.

REALITY

Only 4% - 6% of sexual assault cases are based on false accusations. This percentage of unsubstantiated cases is the same as with many other reported crimes.

MYTH

Persons who dress or act in a sexy way are asking to be sexually assaulted.

REALITY

Many convicted sexual assault assailants are unable to remember what their victims looked like or were wearing.

MYTH

All women secretly want to be raped.

REALITY

While women and men may fantasize about being overpowered during sexual relations, it is usually with a person of their choosing, who they trust. They are in control of the fantasy. No one wants the physical and emotional pain caused by a sexual assault.

MYTH

Only young, pretty women are assaulted.

REALITY

There is no such thing as a "typical victim". Both men and women are assaulted by both male and female assailants. Victims have ranged in age from newborns to 100 years old.

MYTH

It is impossible to sexually assault a man.

REALITY

Men fall victim for the same reasons as women; they are overwhelmed by threats or acts of physical and emotional violence. Also, most sexual assaults that involve a male victim are gang assaults, by other males.

MYTH

If you do not struggle or use physical force to resist you have not been sexually assaulted.

REALITY

If you are forced to have sex without your consent, you have been assaulted whether or not a struggle was involved.