

Men Who Have Been Sexually Assaulted

Rape is a men's issue for many reasons. For one, we don't often talk about the fact that men are sexually assaulted. We need to start recognizing the presence of male survivors and acknowledging their unique experience.

The following questions and answers can help us all learn about male survivors so that we stop treating them as invisible and start helping them heal:

How often are men sexually assaulted?

While the numbers vary from study to study, most research suggests that **10 - 20%** of males will be sexually violated at some point in their lifetimes. That translates into tens of thousands of boys and men assaulted each year alongside hundreds of thousands of girls and women.

If there are so many male survivors, why don't I know any?

Like female survivors, most male survivors never report being assaulted. Perhaps worst of all, men fear being blamed for the assault because they were not "man enough" to protect themselves in the face of an attack.

Can a woman sexually assault a man?

Yes, but it's not nearly as common as male-on-male assault. A recent study shows that more than 86% of male survivors are sexually abused by another male. That is not to say, however, that we should overlook boys or men who are victimized by females. It may be tempting to dismiss such experiences as wanted sexual initiation (especially in the case of an older female assaulting a younger male), but the reality is that the impact of female-on-male assault can be just as damaging.

Don't only men in prison get raped?

While prison rape is a serious problem and a serious crime, many male survivors are assaulted in **every-day** environments often by **people they know** - friends, teammates, relatives, teachers, clergy, bosses, partners. As with female survivors, men are also sometimes raped by strangers. These situations tend to be more violent and more often involve a group of attackers rather than a single attacker.

How does rape affect men differently from women?

Rape affects men in many ways similar to women. Anxiety, anger, sadness, confusion, fear, numbness, self-blame, helplessness, hopelessness, suicidal feelings and shame are common reactions of both male and female survivors.

In some ways, though, men react uniquely to being sexually assaulted. Immediately after an assault, men may show more **hostility and aggression** rather than tearfulness and fear. Over time, they may also question their sexual identity, act out in a sexually aggressive manner, and even downplay the impact of the assault. **(Flip over page for more questions.)**

To learn how men can stop rape, go to
www.MenCanStopRape.org
Learn more about our youth development programs, public education materials, and trainings for professionals.

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Don't men who get raped become rapists?

No! This is a destructive myth that often adds to the anxiety a male survivor feels afterwards. Because of this myth, it is common for a male survivor to fear that he is now destined to do to others what was done to him.

While many convicted sex offenders have a history of being sexually abused, most male survivors **do not** become offenders. The truth is that the great majority of male survivors have never and will never sexually assault anyone.

If a man is raped by another man, does it mean he's gay?

No! A man getting raped by another man says nothing about his sexual orientation before the assault, Nor does it change his sexual orientation afterwards.

Rape is prompted by anger or a desire to intimidate or dominate. Not by sexual attraction or a rapist's assumption about his intended victim's sexual preference.

Because of society's confusion about 1) the role that attraction plays in sexual assault and 2) whether victims are responsible for provoking an assault, even heterosexual male survivors may worry that they somehow gave off "gay vibes" that the rapist picked up and acted upon. This is hardly the case.

How should I respond if a man tells me he has been assaulted?

The basics of supporting female survivors are the same for males. Believe him. Don't push and don't blame. Be cautious about physical contact until he's ready. Ask him if he wants to report it to the authorities and if he wants to talk to a counselor. If you need to, get counseling for yourself as well.

Where can male survivors go for help?

Most community resources - local or campus-based rape crisis centers - have on-site counselors trained in working with male survivors. Or they can refer survivors to professionals who can help. Know the resources in your area to help male survivors heal.

Here's one resource :
MaleSurvivor.org
Check out our website's
RESOURCE section for more.

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