

**TRUST
YOUR
INSTINCTS**

**Reduce your chances of
becoming a sexual assault victim**

**WICHITA AREA SEXUAL
ASSAULT CENTER**

SOME PLAIN TALK

The terms “rape” and “sexual assault” are used interchangeably in many parts of this booklet. The terminology is directed toward women, but it must be remembered that men also can be sexually assaulted.

If you have read sexual assault prevention booklets before, the suggestions have probably been as varied as one can imagine. No one method of prevention is always effective. That is why we have included a variety of options for you to consider.

As you read through this booklet, please keep in mind that while this information is intended to provide suggestions for reducing a person’s vulnerability to the crime of sexual assault, there are no perfect formulas or prevention strategies that are 100% effective. Every situation and each person’s response is different. However, it is important to remember that **RAPE VICTIMS ARE NEVER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INAPPROPRIATE AND ILLEGAL BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE TO ASSAULT THEM AND WHATEVER A VICTIM DOES TO SURVIVE AN ASSAULT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.**

SOME BACKGROUND

Rape is not a crime of sex, it is a crime of VIOLENCE. Many factors contribute to the making of a rapist. The rapist’s ultimate motivation is to control and/or humiliate the victim. The desire for sex is not the prime motivating factor.

Typically a rapist plans the crime. He looks for the right chance and a vulnerable person. Regardless of who you are, you could be the victim of a sexual assault. While there are no absolute defenses against rape or sexual assault, the best defense is prevention, that is, eliminating the perception of vulnerability, thus reducing the rapist’s opportunity to attack. Learn to trust your instincts. Remember, if a situation doesn’t feel right, try to get out of it. Don’t be afraid of hurting someone’s feelings or being embarrassed. Learn to identify and avoid potentially dangerous situations. Remember that rapists are not always strangers. According to recent statistics, more than half of all sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows.

The following sections include information on reducing your vulnerability as well as information on what to do if you are attacked.

HOW TO REDUCE YOUR VULNERABILITY AT HOME

- i Don't place keys under mats, in mailboxes, or other "hidden places".
- i Don't advertise your absence. Stop deliveries and don't leave notes that state you are gone or when you will return.
- i List only your initials and last name on mailboxes and in the phone directory.
- i You have the option of having your telephone number listed in the phone book without your address. Contact the phone company for information.
- i Before moving into a new house or apartment, change the door locks. Deadbolt locks are recommended for every exterior door.
- i Use a peephole or window to identify people at your door. Talk through the door.
- i Install locks on windows so they can be locked open for ventilation as well as locked when closed. Window shades should be drawn after dark.
- i Police officers will display credentials when asked. Request sales and repair persons to show ID's prior to being admitted. It is also a good idea to call the company or agency they are representing and verify their visit. Look up the telephone number yourself-don't use a number they provide.
- i Don't mention to a stranger that a neighbor lives alone or is home alone.
- i If someone asks to use your phone, do not let them in. Offer to make the call for them.
- i If you receive an obscene phone call, hang up immediately. If you continue receiving mysterious or obscene calls, report it to the police department and the telephone company.
- i Do not give out personal information about yourself over the phone or at your door.
- i Never reveal to a telephone caller or to someone at the door who is home, who is out, how long anyone is expected to be out, or where they have gone. Be sure that your answering machine does not reveal this information either.
- i If you suspect or encounter an intruder, dial 911. If you cannot stay on the line, leave the receiver off the hook - the call will be traced and police officers will be sent.

- i Never enter your home if you suspect an intruder. Leave and call the police.
- i When you arrive home, it is a good idea to check your telephone and make sure that it is in working order.
- i Call the Community Affairs Section of the Wichita Police Department at 268-4101 or the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department at 383-7184 for a free home security survey. A Crime Prevention Specialist will come to your home and determine what you need to do to increase the security of your home.

SELF PROTECTION WHILE OUT AND ABOUT

- i Avoid walking alone. There is safety in numbers.
- i Do not feel obligated to be friendly and helpful if you are walking. Rapists may attempt to approach you by asking directions, time, etc. If you get close they can force you into a car or bushes. Stand back and talk loud if necessary.
- i After dark, carry a flashlight.
- i Notice businesses that are open, should you need to ask for help.
- i Avoid poorly lit streets, unpopulated areas, alleys, vacant lots and buildings.
- i If you feel someone is following you, change direction, cross the street, go into a store, or go to the door of a home and have the police called.
- i Have your key ready so your car or home can be opened immediately.
- i When arriving home by taxi or with a friend, ask them to wait until you get inside your home.
- i Never accept a ride from a stranger or casual acquaintance.

PERSONAL SAFETY WHILE DRIVING

- i Keep car doors locked at all times.
- i Check under your car while approaching and check the interior before entering.
- i Know where you are going before you start.
- i Keep your car in good working order and have enough gas to complete the trip.
- i Keep your windows raised high enough so a person cannot reach in and unlock a door when you are stopped.
- i If your safety is threatened, hold down on the horn and drive away as soon as possible.
- i Never pick up hitchhikers.
- i Do not stop to help disabled motorists, instead notify the police.
- i Should your car become disabled, raise the hood and sit inside with the doors locked. Leave the windows up while you talk to anyone that approaches. Ask them to call for help. Purchase a "Please call Police" banner to be stored in your car and displayed in the rear window if your car becomes disabled.
- i Park in well-lit areas. Look around for suspicious persons before leaving your car.
- i Make sure you have a well-lit garage, sidewalk, hallway, and /or front door area when arriving home after dark.
- i Electric garage door openers provide good personal and property security.

PERSONAL SAFETY WHILE TRAVELING

- i Practice the same personal safety habits when traveling on business or vacation as you do when in your home city.
- i Whenever possible, use only your initials, last name and business address on luggage tags.
- i When making travel arrangements your travel agent is a good source for information on your destination. Also, you may want to contact the Convention/Visitors Bureau or local law enforcement agency for more information on your destination and accommodations.
- i When reserving a hotel/motel you should consider asking the following questions:
 - Does the property have security service?
 - Do the doors have deadbolt locks, peepholes, and safety chains?
 - Are there locks on the windows?
 - Are the hallways and parking lots well lit?

PERSONAL SAFETY SUMMARY

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Avoid dangerous situations.
- Think about your options in advance should you encounter an attacker.
- Value yourself and your feelings as much as you value others. It is more important to be safe than liked.
- Trust your instincts!

DATE / ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

A rapist can be stranger, but most often it is someone you know -- a date, an acquaintance, classmate, co-worker, boss, husband, ex-husband, family member, neighbor or someone you met at a party. Regardless of who the attacker is, rape is an act of violence and a violation of the victim's person and rights.

No one can tell who a rapist is by how he looks, but there are behaviors that you may look for in a date or acquaintance. These behaviors do not necessarily indicate that this person is a rapist, however, they might

indicate someone who has issues with power and control. You might consider the following:

- i Is he someone who does not listen to you and take into account your feelings?
- i Is he someone who mixes sex and violence?
- i Is he someone who has an underlying anger toward women?
- i Is he someone who treats you like property?
- i Is he someone who believes that women are supposed to serve men's needs?
- i Is he physically violent?
- i Is he someone who tries to get you drunk or drinks and uses drugs heavily?
- i Is he emotionally abusive?

If you are confronted with someone like this you may want to consider the following strategies. Think ahead. You may come up with additional ideas.

- i Express what you want clearly.
- i Avoid secluded places. Suggest meeting at a public place when you are getting to know someone.
- i Use your own transportation.
- i Avoid the use of drugs or alcohol as they can lessen your ability to recognize or control a dangerous situation.
- i Go out with other couples.
- i Ask about a person you plan to go out with. Check with mutual friends. Listen to what they have to say.
- i Trust your instincts!

ASSERTIVENESS

Assertive behavior may help reduce your vulnerability to rape.

- i Make eye contact with people you meet. Eye contact is a powerful way to say, "I am in control of myself and my environment. Do not violate my boundaries."

- i No one will listen to you or take you seriously if you speak softly. Speak clearly and with authority. Say “no” rather than “well, I don’t know” - speak up.
- i Strong body language sends the same assertive message as eye contact. Walk with a sense of purpose like you know exactly what you are doing and where you are going.
- i Pay attention to your instincts. Do not invalidate them by thinking, “I’m just being paranoid.” If you feel someone can’t be trusted or you are in danger, you probably have a good reason. Listen to your feelings and trust them. Trust your instincts!

WEAPONS

Practicing assertive behaviors and prevention techniques are preferable to using a weapon against an attacker. In deciding to use a weapon if attacked, it is important to consider the following circumstances:

Your surroundings.

How close a weapon is to you.

Your level of fear.

Can you actually use the weapon?

Could the weapon be taken away and used against you?

Use of a weapon requires you to not only be familiar with the weapon, but that you practice with it on a regular basis and are proficient in its use. Once you have made the decision to use a weapon, you must use it to disable the assailant on the first try. If the assailant has a weapon it may not be advisable to attempt to use your weapon. Trust your instincts when making this decision. Only you will be able to determine if the use of a weapon will help you against an attack.

Even if a weapon is readily available to you and you are skilled in its use, your safety is not guaranteed. Do not let carrying a weapon provide you with a false sense of security. After considering all of these facts, you must remember that, in certain situations, you may need to fight for your safety or life by any means possible.

PHYSICAL AGGRESSION AGAINST AN ATTACKER

The decision to use any form of physical aggression against an attacker would depend on the circumstances. Fighting should be your last resort. Your best defense is to avoid physical contact before aggression starts.

If you feel you would want to use physical aggression you should consider the following:

- i Be sure to receive professional physical defense training.
- i Be sure to practice and remain skilled in its use.
- i Be mentally prepared to use your training against your attacker.

Remember, if you use any weapon, physical aggression, or any other means against an attacker, your goal should be to escape. Plan your escape. Know where you will go for help and how you will get there.

SCREAMING, YELLING AND ASSERTIVE BODY LANGUAGE

Deciding whether to yell or scream depends on the circumstances of the attack. Consider the following:

- i Are there people nearby to hear your call for help and offer assistance?
- i Are you in an isolated location with no help nearby?
- i Are there places nearby you can run to for help?

The answer to these questions will help you decide the best course of action in response to an attacker.

Use strong verbal messages and assertive body language as soon as you feel in danger. Being assertive early in the confrontation is more successful than waiting until later. Because an attacker is usually looking for someone he perceives to be vulnerable and passive, it is important to try to change his image of you as someone he can control. Screaming or yelling forces the assailant to acknowledge that you are unwilling to give control to him.

In order to give your most effective scream, you must practice. A soft scream will not be as effective as a loud, strong scream. Some, but not all, studies have shown that these tactics have a higher success rate in resisting an attack than pleading, crying, stalling or reasoning with an attacker.

Whether, or not you choose to scream or yell, remember that only you can decide the best way to respond and that whatever you choose is the right response for you. Trust your instincts!

IF ATTACKED

Your safety is the most important consideration in the case of an attack. Knowing ahead of time what your capabilities are physically and emotionally may be helpful in considering your options. How, or if to resist during an attack is up to you and depends on the circumstances of the attack. If resistance seems to escalate the violence, then choosing to submit may be the best self-defense from further harm. Submitting is not the same as consenting, and it may be the only way to prevent further harm.

During the attack, try to keep the following in mind:

- i Review your options. If you are afraid to attempt an escape, don't try.

Memorize any information you can about the attacker that will be helpful in resorting the crime. Try to remember as many details as possible about what the assailant is wearing, physical description, vehicle and location of the attack.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING AN ATTACK

- i Try to get to a safe place as soon as possible.
- i You may want to report to law enforcement by calling 911. If possible, call immediately.
- i Do not change clothes, clean your clothing, bathe or shower before reporting. This will preserve any physical evidence that may aid in prosecution.
- i You will probably be asked to go to a hospital emergency room. At the hospital, you will be checked over by a doctor or nurse for any injuries and physical evidence will be collected. Baseline testing for sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy is routinely performed at this time. Funds may be available from the state to help pay for the medical examination.
- i If you have any questions about reporting, medical treatment, or need to talk with someone, the Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center is available 24 hours a day at 263-3002.

AFTER YOU REPORT

After the report is made, a detective will probably contact you to follow up on the case. Your cooperation with law enforcement will be vital in pursuing the perpetrator. If charges are filed, the criminal justice system will again need your cooperation.

Over the past few years, advances on behalf of victims have been made to provide fair and compassionate treatment. If you are a victim of a sexual assault, you have rights including knowing what is happening with your case through the criminal justice system.

CONCLUSION

The most important step you can take in protecting yourself against sexual assault is to acknowledge that it can happen to you. The following principles should be useful in helping you reduce your degree of vulnerability.

- i Be alert when you are alone.
- i Be aware of the people around you, your surroundings, and the total environment.
- i Be assertive and do not allow yourself to be intimidated.
- i Stay calm.
- i Think clearly.
- i Be discriminating regarding to whom you confide personal matters and lifestyle.
- i Remember that while you cannot live a crime-free lifestyle, you can live a crime-prevention lifestyle and minimize your chances of a sexual assault, NOT eliminate them.
- i Trust your instincts!

RESOURCE LIST

For more information call:

Wichita Area Sexual Assault Center:

Crisis Line.....(316) 263-3002

Office.....(316) 263-0185

To report a sexual assault call:

Wichita Police Department:.....911

For a free home security check call:

WPD Community Affairs.....(316) 268-4101

Sedgwick County Sheriff.....(316) 383-7184

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