

## Myths about sexual assault and abuse

1. **“It would never happen to me.”** Sexual assaults can happen to ANYONE. Every minute in the U.S., 1.3 women are raped. That’s 78 rapes every hour. *Not only girls are at risk--guys can also find themselves the victims of sexual abuse.*
2. **“It wouldn’t happen to me, because I always know the guys I date.”** The majority of sexual assaults are done by acquaintances. One statistic said 70% of rapes are date rapes (also called acquaintance rapes). Even guys you know can have a sudden change when they start drinking.

## A Few Facts about Sexual Assault and Abuse:

- Sexual assault is about power, control, and anger. It is NOT about romance or passion.
- Forcible or coercive sex is NEVER permissible in any form. And if you know of someone who is forcing girls to have sex, report them immediately. This NOTHING to play around with. You may save someone’s life.
- If someone you know forces you to have sex, it’s still considered rape as much as if that person was a stranger. And it is a serious crime.
- Only 1% of all date rapes are ever reported and 57% of all rapes happen on a date.
- One of out 3 women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.
- Date rape, sexual assault, or sexual abuses are NEVER the victim’s fault. Nobody has the right to violate your body—EVER!
- Taking sex from someone, by force or coercion does NOT lead to intimacy, and it’s NOT an achievement to be proud of with friends.
- **Sexual abuse** doesn’t have to involve intercourse. There are non-touching, touching, as well as forced or physically violent forms of abuse. Anytime someone touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable or is inappropriate in their conversation with you, say NO, get away, and tell someone you trust. Sexual abuse needs to be reported, no matter what.

## Some Preventative Actions to Take to Minimize your Likelihood of Sexual Assault:

1. Always use common sense and be alert when you are out alone. Trust your instincts and if something feels wrong or dangerous, pay attention and take action.
2. When dating or out with friends, trust your gut! It’s better to err on the side of being cautious than by being too trusting. If someone is making you feel uneasy, get away or get out of the situation.
3. Stay completely away from drugs and alcohol.
4. Date only Christians who share the same values you do. Get to know them, their friends, and their family well before you ever solo-date with them.
5. Always have a cell phone or money for an emergency call with you.
6. Stay in public places, date in groups, set-up a plan for the date and stick to it.

7. Beware of the Internet. There ARE predators out there, and you don't even have to meet them in person for them to violate you through inappropriate conversations or pornographic materials. You need to cut-off contact with that person immediately and report the incident to a trusted adult. NEVER agree to meet someone in person you've met online.

### What to do if you become the victim of a sex crime:

1. KNOW that God loves you and is there for you to help you find healing.
2. KNOW that you are the victim. It is NOT your fault. You have nothing to feel guilty or ashamed of. Your attacker/abuser may try to tell you it's your fault. They don't want you to speak up about what happened.
3. Call for help immediately—a parent, trusted friend or adult, or one of us at the church. Then, go to the emergency room and call the police.
4. Don't take a shower or change clothes, especially if you have been raped. You'll need to be examined by a physician, and the police will want the DNA evidence your attacker left behind. You'll need to be checked for STDs and physical wounds and be treated accordingly. This may seem very unpleasant or embarrassing, but it is vitally important. Your actions can help to stop this person from attacking or abusing others.

### What to do if a friend tells you they've been assaulted or abused:

1. Thank him/her for sharing their secret with you. Explain you'll help every way you can.
2. Pray with him/her. Remind them that God loves them and they are NOT to blame for what has happened.
3. **IF THE EVENT HAPPENED RECENTLY**—follow the same procedures outlined above.
  - a. Get her or him immediately to the hospital
  - b. Call the police and their parents and/or a trust adult.
  - c. Don't let him/her change clothes or clean-up.
  - d. Stay with them as long as you can, definitely until a parent or trusted adult arrives to be with them.
4. In the days, weeks, and months to follow—
  - Listen, listen, listen! It's in sharing our hurts with another that the healing begins, so you are there at the start of her healing process.
  - Resist the urge to give advice. Your job is to be a friend, not a fix-it-all.
  - Don't walk out on them. He/she needs you to be a stabilizing force in their chaotic world. They need help rebuilding trust.
  - Be honest and don't make promises you can't keep (like saying, "You can tell me. I won't tell anyone else.")
  - Help them get the professional help they need. Turn to your school counselor or someone at the church for help in getting your friend connected with a counselor or psychologist.