

This booklet has been produced by The Haven Whitechapel, a centre for victims of rape and sexual assault. It forms part of our sexual violence prevention programme for secondary school pupils in London.

We hope that it helps to dispel some myths that you might have heard about rape and sexual assault. There are some useful contact numbers at the back if you have had problems yourself or would like to talk to someone.



The law says:

Rape is when a man uses his penis to penetrate the vagina, anus or mouth of another person without their consent. Both men and women can be raped.

The maximum sentence for rape is life imprisonment.

Assault by penetration is when a man or a woman penetrates another person's vagina or anus with another part of their body, or with objects, without the consent of the person. The victim can be male or female.

The maximum sentence for assault by penetration is life imprisonment.

Sexual assault is when a man or woman touches another person, male or female, in a sexual way, without that person's consent.

The maximum sentence for sexual assault is 10 years imprisonment.

Consent

A person consents if he or she agrees by choice, and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. Sexual Offences Act (2003).

Here are some common myths concerning sexual assault. Do you agree or disagree?

If a girl or boy dresses in a certain way they are asking for sex.

This is not true. The only way you can be sure that someone wants sex is if they actually tell you. You cannot assume anything. Some people may dress in a certain way but it does not mean that they are asking for sex. Maybe they want to attract someone but that is very different from wanting to have sex with them. That would be like saying all people who wear hoodies are troublemakers.

When it comes to sex, girls say 'no' but they really mean 'yes'.

If you are unsure whether consent has been given do not have sex.



Rape only happens to girls.

Many people believe rape just doesn't happen to men, but men are also raped (look at the definition on page 3). Here are some interesting statistics.

- The Metropolitan Police have said that 11% of people reporting that they have been raped are men.
- According to the 2004/5 British Crime Survey, there were 12,867 reported rapes of women in England and Wales and 1,135 rapes of men.

Men and boys who have been raped often find it difficult to come forward and get help. They may be frightened of seeming weak, or think others will be prejudiced against them or think they are gay.

These reactions to male rape are all most unfair. Being raped is not a sign of weakness, or that a man is gay. Rape is about power, control and abuse. There is support out there for men or boys who have been raped or sexually assaulted and some helpful numbers are listed at the back of this booklet.



Alcohol and drugs cause incidents of sexual violence against women and men.

Drugs and alcohol are never the **cause** of an attack. They may be involved, but it is the attacker who is doing the attacking, not the drugs and alcohol.

If someone is attacked while they are drunk they are not to blame for the assault. They may be to blame for being drunk or high, but only the person committing the rape is responsible for the attack.

It is not acceptable to see someone who is drunk or high and use the situation to cause harm. It is also not okay for the attacker to blame drink or drugs for their actions. Think of drink-driving. If you are drunk and cause an accident, you will still be considered responsible.



Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers.

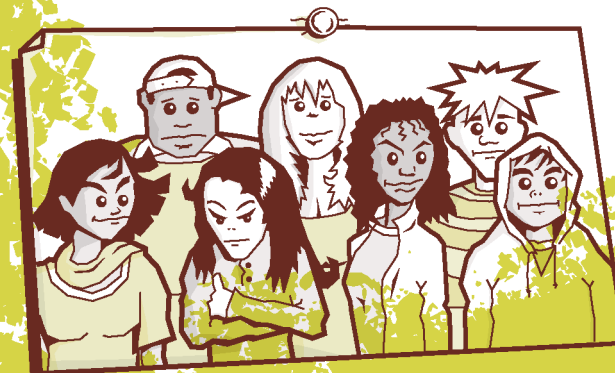
This is not true. Most rapists are known to their victims. The British Crime Survey of 2001 found only 8% of assaults on women were by strangers.

If a person is being raped and they don't fight back, then they are probably enjoying it.

This is rubbish. During very threatening situations some people can't fight back or run away but just 'freeze' and try to survive. They may also be too frightened to scream or shout. Being silent can be a way of just getting through something as quickly as possible.

A woman cannot be raped by her boyfriend. If they are dating or married, he can have sex whenever he wants.

Rape is about forcing someone to have sex, it doesn't matter whether that person is your girlfriend or boyfriend, husband or wife. If a man rapes his partner he will have committed a criminal offence.



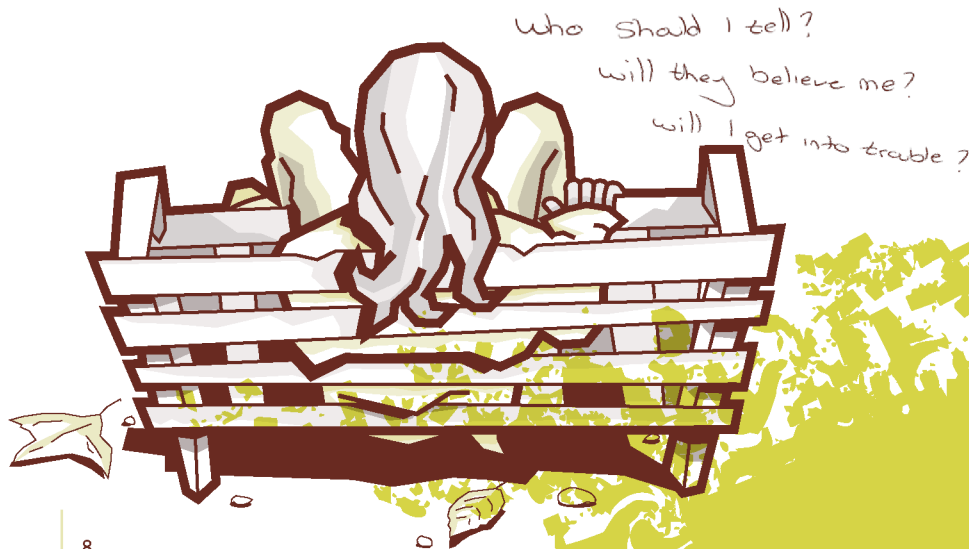
Men rape because they lose control of themselves.

This is not true, rape is very much about power and control. It is about making someone do something that they do not want to do. If you are out of control, you do not take the time to tell someone not to scream, or to ask them not to tell anyone about the rape.

Most women who report rape are lying.

According to the organisation Rape Crisis, the level of false reporting of rape is only about 2%.

It is rare for any woman to falsely report a rape, the examination can take a while and reporting a rape is never easy. Far more women are too afraid to report rape because they are worried that they won't be believed.



Safety tips

Here are some safety tips that you might find useful.

1. Be clear about where you are going out, with whom, and how you will get home. Never get into an unlicensed minicab.
2. Let others know if you are feeling uncomfortable or unwell in a situation.
3. Know your boundaries and be comfortable about expressing them.
4. Be aware! Drink and drugs can affect your reactions as well as your ability to be alert.
5. If you are using the internet, be very careful with whom you are chatting online. Unfortunately there are people out there who use the internet as a way of meeting young people purely for the purposes of sexual assault or rape.

If you do make friends online, and you want to meet them, you should definitely tell an adult about your plans.

A Haven client's real experiences

This poem was written by a 17 year old who attended the Haven after being raped.

Feeling

I'm alone now.
No one to hold me while I cry
I'm broken and bruised.
I'm a victim and I can only ask why?
Why was it me?
Why did it have to happen to me?
Sometimes why is too hard to see
What did I ever do so wrong to deserve this?
I have everyone but deep inside its me I miss
I know I was stuck up and dumb
He grabbed me and I tried to run
I couldn't get away but by that point
it was too late
Now I have to face it,
it was me that was raped
It's hard to live with that,
to face up to it everyday
I wanna get over this but
I don't think there's a way
I'm only a kid, just a young girl
Sometimes you don't know the people
who ruin your world
If the police didn't come when they did
I'd be dead
Maybe that would be better
coz this is messin with my head
I have nightmares.
I can still see him and feel him
touching my hair



Why did that have to happen to me?
It just isn't fair
I feel disgusting and sick
I walked that road. I'm so thick
I'd been warned but I thought no,
that won't happen to me
Sometimes people are so naive
they really don't see
Sometimes things happen
that can't be explained
How should I feel?
Dirty, ruined, ashamed?
I feel all of that
but ten times more
I'm empty, dry and worst of all raw
I can't feel any love,
I just push everyone away
I know it's not right and why I do it
I just can't say
I don't know how
to deal with this
I'm trying but
I just don't understand
I guess I'm meant to be glad
the police came and I was found
Living with this is the hardest thing
I will ever have to do
But is it really worth
going through?

Useful help lines and websites

For men who have been sexually assaulted

Survivors 0845 122 1201

For anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted:

Childline 0800 1111

NCH action for children 020 7704 7000

NSPCC 0800 800 500

The Haven Whitechapel 020 7247 4787
www.thehavens.org.uk

The Metropolitan Police
www.met.police.uk/sapphire

For people in care:

The Who Cares Trust 020 7251 3177

For anyone:

R U thinking about it?
www.ruthinking.co.uk
(website about sexual health)

For parents:

Parentline 0808 800 2222

Written by Samantha Keeling

the havens 

dispelling myths

about rape and sexual assault



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