



AMBER'S STORY

Amber was a freshman in college and was enjoying all her new experiences, especially being away from home. Amber went to lots of parties with friends but she generally checked in with her group and never drank much alcohol.

One night Amber decided to go to a party with Sarah, a good friend of hers. At the party Amber noticed this strange guy checking her out and it made her a little uncomfortable, but she didn't pay him any mind. She was having too good of a time with her friends.

As the party was winding down, Amber was getting tired, so she decided to walk back to her dorm without Sarah, who wasn't ready to leave. About half way through her walk home Amber noticed someone behind her and it seemed like the person was following her. She began to walk faster but the person was catching up with her. As the person got closer to her she realized it was the creepy guy from the party. She started running but she could not get away in time. He grabbed her, held her down, and sexually assaulted her.

Amber was so ashamed and scared about what had happened to her. She was afraid to go to the police in fear that they wouldn't believe her. A week after the incident, and many sleepless nights, she decided to go to the police and report what had happened. She still had bruising and the police had her fill out a rape kit. They were able to build a case against the perpetrator and make an arrest.

Amber joined a self-help group, and through counseling, she was finally able to cope with what happened to her. She's now loving college life again, but learned a valuable lesson about being aware of her surroundings and making sure to always stay with her group.

WHERE TO FIND HELP?

If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, there is help out there for you. Please, remember it is never your fault and you can survive.

The National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE.

THE FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT

Test your knowledge by answering the following questions:

1. If a woman was wearing something revealing, then she was asking for it.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. Sexual assault is a crime and is punishable by law.
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. Once a man has a physical reaction during intimacy, he cannot stop himself from continuing.
 - a. True
 - b. False
4. If you have been drinking alcohol at the time of the sexual assault, then it is no longer a crime.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Sexual assault is consensual.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answers: 1. b; 2. a; 3. b; 4. b; 5. b

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SEXUAL ASSAULT



STAY SAFE SERIES

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AN ACT OF VIOLENCE



WHAT IS SEXUAL ASSAULT?

Sexual Assault is defined as a forced or coerced sexual encounter that is non-consensual. Sexual assault is an act of violence and is about power and domination. Many times perpetrators will threaten the victim's family or use violence. Still other times, perpetrators will prey on the vulnerabilities of a victim and offer gifts and attention before committing the crime.

In either instance, sexual assault is an act of violence not pleasure and is most certainly a crime punishable by law.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH!

Myths and misconceptions:

There are so many misconceptions or myths involving sexual assault that have led to indifference in our culture. Here are a few:

Myth: Women who dress a certain way are asking for trouble and therefore deserve what they get.

Truth: The truth is that regardless of what a person is wearing, sexual assault is never okay. Just because a person dresses a certain way does not mean they want to be sexually assaulted.

Myth: If a girl lets a guy go so far, then he cannot physically stop until he has had sex.

Truth: Medically speaking, a man can stop at any point during physical intimacy, and if it is not consensual then he should stop regardless of what he is feeling.

Myth: If there is alcohol involved, neither party can be blamed for their actions, and therefore, the assault cannot be considered a crime.

Truth: While alcohol does lower inhibitions, it is no excuse for forced or coerced sexual activity. It is still a crime punishable by law.

IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT

Regardless of the way a person is dressed or the circumstance "no" always means "no." Many times victims blame themselves if they have been drinking and are afraid of reporting the act to the police for fear of not being believed.

Many carry this guilt and shame with them for years and never tell anyone what happened. What a victim needs to understand is that it is never their fault and that there is help available to them.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR?

Know the Signs

What are the warning signs of sexual assault?

- The victim is easily startled or distressed around certain people.
- There is a constant sense of fear.
- The victim withdraws from family and friends and makes excuses to break social engagements.
- There may be physical signs of the assault including bruising, cuts, or other marks.

Long term effects of Sexual Assault

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Intimacy Issues
- Self-hatred
- Suicidal thoughts
- Anger and Violent or destructive behavior, such as use of alcohol or drugs

WHAT TO DO IF IT HAPPENS TO YOU?

So, what should you do if you find yourself a victim of a sexual assault? Here's a few suggestions:

1. Find a safe place to go away from the perpetrator, possibly with a close friend or family member that you trust.
2. Remember that what happened is never your fault, so do not blame yourself.
3. Do not bathe, wash your hands, brush your teeth or smoke. There may be residual evidence that needs to be collected if you plan on pressing charges against the perpetrator.
4. Report the attack to the police as soon as possible.
5. Seek immediate medical attention in order to test for STDs or stop a possible unwanted pregnancy.
6. Remember that healing takes time. Even if you did not report the attack at the time, it is never too late to get help.

REDUCING THE RISK OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Good Decisions

Always be firm

- Be firm when you tell someone what you want or don't want to happen.
- "No" always means "No"; speak plainly and clearly. Do not worry about being impolite.
- Make sure that your body language matches what you are saying; do not smile or laugh but use firm posture and eye contact.



Always plan ahead

- Always carry a cell phone or be in close range of a phone.
- Always prepare for your own transportation and bring extra money just in case you need to catch a bus or cab.
- Travel with a friend or group of friends and check in with each other often.
- Never give someone you do not know well your home address.
- Never leave your drink unattended; drugs used for date rape and sexual assault are odorless and colorless and can be easily slipped into someone's drink.
- Always keep house and car doors locked, even in daylight.

Always be aware of your surroundings

- Always know where you are and who you are with.
- Take note of your surroundings, and if you feel unsafe, get to a safe place and report any suspicious activity or groups to the police.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel safe, then it probably isn't.

