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**80% of the women who are raped are victimized by someone they know.**

*Rape in America: A Report to the Nation*

National Victim Center,  
1992

## Acquaintance Rape

### Acquaintance Rape

Acquaintance rape is a misunderstood form of criminal violence. There is a common misconception that acquaintance rape is not as serious, not as criminal, and not as traumatic to the victim as stranger rape. Some people think it isn't "real rape." These are mistaken beliefs. Rape is a felony crime, regardless of the offender's relationship to the victim. Acquaintance rape is just as serious and just as devastating to the victim as stranger rape.

If you are a victim of acquaintance rape, get the help and support you need to cope with the effects of the assault and heal from the trauma you have suffered.

Here are some steps you can take to avoid or prevent acquaintance rape.

**Know your sexual intentions and limits and communicate them clearly.** You have the right to say "no" to any unwanted sexual contact. If you say "no," say it like you mean it. Back up your words with your body language. If you are uncertain about what you want, ask your partner to respect your feelings. Don't give mixed messages.

**Don't assume your partner can read your mind.** Don't assume that your partner will "get the message" without your having to say what you are feeling. Tell the person you are with how far you want to go, what you want and don't want to do, and when you want to stop.

**Remember that some people think that drinking heavily, wearing "sexy" clothes, or agreeing to be alone with them indicates a willingness to have sex.** Be especially careful to communicate your limits and intentions clearly in such situations.

**Trust your "gut" feelings.** If you start to feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a situation, listen to your feelings and act on them. Get yourself out of the situation as soon as possible.

**Don't be afraid to ask for help or "make a scene" if you feel threatened.** If you are being pressured or forced into sexual activity against your will, let the other person know how you feel and get out of the situation, even if it's awkward and even if you embarrass the other person or hurt his feelings.

**Be especially careful in situations involving the use of drugs or alcohol.** Drugs and alcohol can make you less aware of danger signs and less able to communicate clearly. Be especially aware when you are in a new situation or with people that you don't know well. You need to be able to make good decisions to protect yourself from sexual assault.

**Go to parties or clubs with friends you can trust and agree to "look out" for one another.** At parties where there is drinking or drugs, appoint a "designated sober person," one friend who *won't* drink and who will look out for the others in the group by regularly checking on them. Leave parties with people you know. Don't leave alone or with someone you don't know very well.

**Listen carefully to the person you are with in sexual situations.** If your partner says "no" to sexual contact, or her body language tells you she is unsure or unwilling, **stop**. If your partner was willing at first, but now doesn't want to go any further, **stop**. If you think you are getting a "mixed message," or you are not sure what your partner wants, don't use threats or force. **Stop**. Ask your partner what she or he wants.

**Don't assume you know what another person wants.** For example, don't automatically assume that just because a girl gets drunk, wears "sexy" clothing, or agrees

to be alone with you, she wants to have sex. Don't assume that just because someone has had sex with you before, she or he is willing to have sex with you again. And don't assume that when a partner consents to kissing or other sexual touching, she or he is willing to have sexual intercourse.

**Be aware that if you have sex with someone who is mentally or physically unable to give consent or is unable to resist, you may be committing rape or sexual assault.** If you have sex with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs, "passed out," asleep, unable to say "no," or too "out of it" to know what is happening, you may be guilty of rape or sexual assault.

**Resist peer pressure to do things you don't want to do.** Don't participate in violent or criminal acts or get involved in any activity that makes you feel uncomfortable. Don't ever "join in" or "go along" with people who are abusing another person.

**"Get involved" if you think someone else might be in trouble.** If you see someone who could be about to commit rape or become a victim, help the person who may get hurt.