COMMON MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT THE CAUSES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Myth
Victims provoke Sexual Assaults when they dress provocatively or act in a promiscuous manner.

Fact
Rape and Sexual Assault are crimes of violence and control that stem from a person’s determination to exercise power over another. Neither provocative dress nor promiscuous behaviors are invitations for unwanted sexual activity. Forcing someone to engage in non-consensual activity is Sexual Assault, regardless of the way that person dresses or acts.

“My forcing someone to engage in non-consensual activity is Sexual Assault, regardless of the way that person dresses or acts.”

Myth
If a person goes to someone’s room or house or goes to a bar, they assume the risk of Sexual Assault. If something happens later, they can’t claim that they were raped or sexually assaulted because they should have known not to go to those places.

Fact
This “assumption of risk” wrongfully places the responsibility of the offender’s action with the victim. Even if a person went voluntarily to someone’s home or room and consented to engage in some sexual activity, it does not serve as blanket consent for all sexual activity. University policy defines Sexual Misconduct to include any sexual activity that is engaged in without Affirmative Consent. Affirmative Consent means informed, affirmative, voluntary, and mutual agreement to engage in sexual activity. Each person involved is responsible to ensure that they have the Affirmative Consent of the other participant(s). When in doubt if the person is comfortable with an elevated level of sexual activity, stop and ask. When someone says “no” or “stop,” that means “STOP!” Sexual activity forced upon another without valid consent is Sexual Assault.

“Even if a person went voluntarily to someone’s home or room and consented to engage in some sexual activity, it does not serve as blanket consent for all sexual activity.”
Myth
It is not Sexual Misconduct if it happens after drinking or taking drugs.

“A person who is incapacitated due to the influence of alcohol or drugs is not able to consent to sexual activity.”

Myth
Most Sexual Assaults are committed by strangers. It’s not rape if the people involved know each other.

“90% of victims knew the person who sexually victimized them.”

Myth
Rape can be avoided if women avoid dark alleys or other “dangerous” places where strangers might be hiding or lurking.

Myth
A person who has really been sexually assaulted will be hysterical.

“There is no “right way” to react to being sexually assaulted.”

Fact
Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs is not an invitation for sexual activity. A person under the influence does not cause others to assault them; others choose to take advantage of the situation and sexually assault them because they are in a vulnerable position. A person who is incapacitated due to the influence of drugs or alcohol is not able to consent to sexual activity.

Fact
Most Sexual Assaults and Rape are committed by someone the victim knows. A study of sexual victimization of college women showed that about 90% of victims knew the person who sexually victimized them. Most often, a boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, classmate, friend, acquaintance, or co-worker sexually victimized the person. It is important to remember that Sexual Misconduct can occur in both heterosexual and same-gender relationships.

Fact
Rape and other Sexual Misconduct can occur at any time, in many places, to anyone.

Fact
Victims of Sexual Assault exhibit a spectrum of responses to the assault which can include: calm, hysteria, withdrawal, anxiety, anger, apathy, denial and shock. Being sexually assaulted is a very traumatic experience. Reaction to the assault and the length of time needed to process through the experience vary with each person. There is no “right way” to react to being sexually assaulted.
Assumptions about the way a victim “should act” may be detrimental to the victim because each victim copes in different ways.

**Myth**
All victims will report the crime immediately to the police. If they do not report it or delay in reporting it, then they must have changed their minds after it happened, wanted revenge or didn’t want to look like they were sexually active.

“**Just because a person does not report the incident does not mean it did not happen.**”

**Fact**
There are many reasons why a sexual assault victim may not report the assault to the police or campus officials. It is not easy to talk about being sexually assaulted and can feel very shameful. The experience of retelling what happened may cause the person to relive the trauma.

Another reason for delaying a report or not making a report is the fear of retaliation by the offender. There is also the fear of being blamed, not being believed and being required to go through judicial proceedings. Just because a person does not report the incident does not mean it did not happen.

**Myth**
Only young, pretty women are assaulted.

“The belief that only young pretty women are sexually assaulted stems from the myth that Sexual Misconduct is based on sex and physical attraction.”

**Fact**
The belief that only young pretty women are sexually assaulted stems from the myth that Sexual Misconduct is based on sex and physical attraction. Sexual Assault is a crime of power and control. Offenders often choose people whom they perceive as most vulnerable to attack or over whom they believe they can assert power. Men and boys are also sexually assaulted, as well as persons with disabilities. Assumptions about the “typical” victim might lead others not to report the assault because they do not fit the stereotypical victim profile.
Myth
It's only Rape if the victim puts up a fight and resists.

"Those who do not resist may feel if they do so, they will anger their attacker, resulting in more severe injury."

Fact
Many states do not require the victim to resist in order to charge the offender with Rape or Sexual Assault. Those who do not resist may feel if they do so, they will anger their attacker, resulting in more severe injury. Many assault experts say that victims should trust their instincts and intuition and do what they believe will most likely keep them alive. Not fighting or resisting an attack does not equal consent.

Myth
Someone can only be sexually assaulted if a weapon was involved.

Fact
In many cases of Sexual Assault, a weapon is not involved. The offender often uses physical strength, physical violence, intimidation, threats or a combination of these tactics to overpower the victim. Although the presence of a weapon while committing the assault may result in a higher penalty or criminal charge, the absence of a weapon does not mean that the offender cannot be held criminally responsible for a Sexual Assault.
For more information, visit:
http://www.cpp.edu/~officeofequity/