

TIPS

FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN ON HOW TO PREVENT AND COPE WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

Please note that:

All girls and women - including babies, old women, pregnant women, mentally retarded women, nuns, women who use hijab (the veil) are at risk of being raped, sexually harassed and sexually exploited.

A. RAPE

PREVENTION

- * Do not walk alone in the dark. Avoid late night trips. Rapists operate best in darkness.
- * Do not solicit for or accept rides from unknown men. In the past, a number of men have raped and gang raped women that they have given rides or supposedly “helped”.
- * Reject firmly, unsolicited favours. Rapists often come as “friends” and lure their victims with gifts.
- * Be choosy about the timing of the parties you attend. At all times, serial rapists organize parties to lure victims.
- * Make sure you are not the only female left with men in a bus or taxi at night.
- * Be sure that you are not the only female reading in a lecture room occupied by just 2 or 3 men at night.
- * Avoid being alone (whether at home, in school or in the work environment) with: a man that you instinctively distrust; a man that is on drugs or has ingested alcohol; a man that is quick to slap and punch; a man that shows disrespect to women in language, attitudes or behaviour (or all three) and a man that you hardly know.
- * Have a sense of self worth and be assertive. Being a nice, lovely, quiet, non-assertive female is clearly not advantageous in situations that are conducive to rape.

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- * If attacked, tell yourself you are fighting to survive. So, push away fear.
- * Shout and call for help in all circumstances.
- * Run away, preferably to a place where you can be safe.
- * If the door is not locked and the assailant is clearly not armed, and he is forcing himself on you, fight him with everything within your reach.
- * Do something desperate, including giving a hard and deep bite or knock, in the most unusual parts of the body- nostrils, groins etc.
- * Inflict deep, if possible, fatal injuries on the assailant.
- * **If the rapist(s) have his/their way, get away from the scene of the incident.**
- * **Preserve Evidence** – that is, do not: take a bath; change clothing; brush or comb hair.
- * Discuss with a trusted person and seek medical attention. Insist on seeing a medical doctor.
- * Report to an organization like WARSHE.
- * Report to the local police or security outfit.
- * Keep torn clothings and underwears, which you would hand over to the police once investigation begins.
- * Be determined to survive the attack. So, co-operate as help comes your way.

B. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

PREVENTION

- * Avoid repeated, unnecessary visits to any male in a position of power (e.g. your lecturer, boss, an official etc) because such visits may be misinterpreted.
- * Wear dresses/apparels etc that are well-suited for/to the occasion or environment. This is important because the fad now is for: good and well intentioned men and women, as well as rapists and sexual abusers to use girls' "bad dressing" as a justification for, and a reason for rape and sexual harassment. Although, we do not agree with them because we know that nuns, women in hijab, babies and old women (who do not "dress badly" or "provocatively") get raped, they are also sexually harassed and assaulted. We plead for adherence to the principle of: suitability of certain kinds of clothing in certain environments. We ought not to help rapists and sexual harassers absolve themselves of blame in their criminal and abusive behaviours.
- * Trust your intuitions. Are you suspicious of a powerful male? If yes, keep him at arms length.

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- * Sexual harassment is harmful and it does not just go away. So, don't ignore it.
- * Be formal and assertive in your interactions with a male who is harassing you.
- * Say NO emphatically, although this will not deter a determined sexual harasser.
- * You may try being extremely and embarrassingly polite (the Nigerian way) to lecherous males who are putting you under pressure for sexual favours, whether at work or in school.
- * If he does not stop, report to responsible individuals within the organization or institution of learning, labour leaders or the Code of Conduct Bureau.
- * Contact an organization such as WARSHE.
- * It should not signal the end of a career or education. And, be determined not to succumb.
- * If you succumb, it will lower your self-esteem.

C. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

PREVENTION

- * If you are poor (in the economic sense), avoid exchanging sex for money. You help men to abuse you if you exchange sex for money. Ask friends, relations and more privileged women for financial assistance and do petty jobs in addition to schooling and or working.
- * If you are academically weak or have limited abilities, do not exchange sex for grades or promotions. Ask more academically endowed and more capable friends to help you out. Study hard and work hard.
- * Do not exchange sex for your academic rights; your rights to accommodation and your rights as a worker.

- * If a trusted friend or relation is exploiting you sexually because he gives you financial assistance, and accommodates you, do not suffer in silence. Talk to someone he respects about it. If he persists, talk to an organization like WARSHE.

HOW CAN YOU HELP OTHERS TO PREVENT AND COPE WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE?

- * Be your sister's keeper. Warn another girl/woman about a potentially dangerous situation. The **WARSHE ALERT CARDS** will come handy in this respect. **Collect some NOW.**
- * Provide solid, brick wall personal support for girls and women who have been traumatized. Listen to them, don't blame them; be present as they meet with, or appear before doctors, police, lawyers, officials of institutions of learning, relations and friends of alleged offenders, etc.
- * Do not advise girls and women who have been or are being traumatized to "shut-up" and "put-up with it". This kind of advice strengthens rapists and other sexual abusers as it allows them to go unsanctioned, and so, puts more girls and women at risk of sexual violence and abuse.
- * Do not gloat over the abuse of another girl or woman.
- * Do not turn the abuse of another girl or woman into subject of gossip.

To Mothers (and Fathers)

- * Do not employ male helps if you are a mother to baby girls, young girls and teenage girls.
- * Watch the interactions of the male relations within the household with your baby girls, the toddlers, the primary age and the teenage girls.
- * Do not hesitate to insist that they should not bathe for, nor help clean the bumbum of the young ones. In addition, they should not place the girls on their laps.
- * Watch the daddies too. Incest is real.
- * Watch your young and teenage boys' interactions with teenage or young adult female household helps.
- * If your little boy or girl or teenager begins to resist seeing a paediatrician or a gynaecologist that s/he used to see without pressure in the past, listen, find out why; but do not push him or her to the doctor.
- * Let pre-primary and primary age children (in particular girls) know that: **it is bad for anybody to play with those parts of their bodies below the shoulders and above the knees.** They should therefore bite whoever plays with those parts of their bodies and report to their mummies and or their teachers.
- * Resist bringing-up your girls in a way that they feel, and or are convinced that they are subordinate to men and that they have to do men's wishes all the time.
- * Try to be your child's best friend.
- * Encourage your child to discuss everything (including his or her body) with you. This will give you the chance to give information about socially acceptable attitudes and behaviours in respect of sex. Male children in particular, need to learn about

what constitutes acceptable sexual overtures and abusive sexual relationships from their parents.

But what is: Rape, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation?

- **Rape** is the act of forcing someone through violence, threat of violence or coercion (this includes verbal coercion) to have sexual intercourse.

Rape can be either:

- ❖ **Attempted Rape** The assailant did not succeed in having contact with and penetrating the victim's Vagina.
- ❖ **Stranger Rape** Rape by someone you have never met, someone totally unknown to.
- ❖ **Acquaintance or Date Rape** Rape by someone known to you whether a co-worker or boss; a student like you, a relative, a neighbour, a spiritual leader etc.
- ❖ **Statutory Rape** Rape of persons that are minors under the law (in Nigeria, minors are persons below age 18).
- ❖ **Gang Rape** When more than one man take turns to rape a girl or woman or girls and women in the same place.

Sexual Harassment is unwanted sexual attention, which may interfere with a person's academic or employment activities/opportunities. Such unsolicited and unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature would usually come from someone in a position of power. That is, a boss, a lecturer, or an official. It is a form of discrimination and it is an abuse of power. Sexual Harassment includes:

- ❖ Continuous and persistent request for sexual favours even when such have been rejected.
- ❖ Unwelcome or demeaning remarks about the victim's body, her gender and or her capabilities.
- ❖ Unnecessary touching, patting or hugging that the victim finds unacceptable.
- ❖ Unacceptable and inappropriate references to sexual organs; sexual humor and obscene gestures, such as staring intensely at a woman's breast or buttocks while passing obscene remarks about female sexual organs.

Sexual Exploitation is when a person obtains sex from another, **in a seemingly voluntary and fair exchange**. It is an unjust transaction in which sex is the medium of exchange. The power-relation at the background of sexual exploitation makes it a special kind of exercise of one person's power over another. The one who is exercising the power can be:

- ❖ A boss who can influence the other's promotion or means of livelihood
- ❖ A lecturer who can influence student's grade
- ❖ An official who can determine whether women have access to what is theirs by right
- ❖ A relation who can decide to withhold financial and other support
- ❖ A private tutor or a coach who tells his pupil that she will never have a tutor or coach who will be better than him and he alone can make her successful
- ❖ A spiritual leader, who tells women that their problems can only be solved if he intervenes on their behalf with God.

From:

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