

What Men Can Do To Prevent Sexual Assault

- **It isn't enough to be "against rape."** Research shows that the vast majority of heterosexual men would never rape a woman and believe that rape is wrong. Yet, most college men who commit rape fail to recognize their acts as such, even when the victim presses charges. Closely and critically examine the way you treat and feel about women: might you ever be placing yourself in potentially compromising situations? Ask yourself honestly: do you believe in any rape myths or some variation of them? If so, work on changing.
- **Take an active stand against sexism.** Avoid making sexist jokes or laughing when others tell them. Whether you actively participate in the degradation of women or simply passively listen, you are communicating that you believe women are not as deserving of respect or equal treatment as men are. Jokes, comments, pornography and other forms of media which objectify or sexualize women foster a "rape culture" which justifies and normalizes rape. Remember, too, that every woman is somebody's sister, daughter, mother, girlfriend, etc. Men demand that the women who are close to them be treated appropriately but some men may fail to afford the same treatment to other women. Treat all women as you would want the women you care about to be treated.
- **Never assume.** Ask straightforward, tactful questions about your partner's sexual boundaries and desires. If you believe you're mature enough to have sex, then you should be comfortable with open, honest communication — even if it means you might get rejected. Refrain from coercive, pressuring techniques. Realize that gender norms may inhibit women from being assertive when expressing their sexuality, so when a woman is comfortable enough to be responsible for her own sexuality, she needs to be appreciated for that, not judged. But if a woman is trying to play "head games" or use sex to manipulate you, get yourself out of the situation.
- **Establish clear verbal consent from a sober partner.** Research shows that men and women interpret non-verbal signals, dress, and behavior in different ways. Men, in general, more readily interpret cues as signs of sexual interest when women are in fact only being friendly or flirtatious, for example, going up to a man's room, wearing revealing clothing, or dancing in a suggestive manner. Unless she's given you a verbal, audible and sober "yes," you don't have clear consent for sexual intercourse.
- **Manage alcohol and other drug use.** The vast majority of campus rapes involve alcohol or other drug use on the part of the perpetrator and/or victim. Research studies demonstrate that alcohol increases male sexual aggression by exacerbating the effects of testosterone. Men should especially be aware that when they are intoxicated, they may not listen as well or be aware of their own strength. Regardless of your state of intoxication, you are accountable for your actions.
- **Hold your male friends accountable.** How men are raised in US society can affect the way men think and talk about sexual relationships or women. You may feel a lot of pressure to prove your masculinity. The best role models of masculinity are those who aren't afraid to stand up for or do the right thing. Stop a friend who is getting too sexually aggressive. If you care about your male friends, don't let them take drunk women up to their rooms, sexually harass women at a house party or in a bar, or otherwise place themselves in potentially risky situations. Men have a lot to lose if they're accused or convicted of rape.
- **Take a public stand against sexual assault.** Write letters to the editor of the college newspaper. Participate in anti-violence marches and rallies. Not enough men's voices are heard in the public arena in support of a non-violent community. All men are ethically and morally responsible for influencing the behavior of the few men who do commit violence against women. Ultimately, men have the greatest potential to impact other men and prevent sexual assault (Katz, 1995).

Because the overwhelming majority of campus rapes involve a male student assaulting a female student, most of the suggestions provided above apply to heterosexual relationships; however, we recognize that same-sex assaults also occur, and many of these same strategies can be applied for prevention.

This resource is intended to provide the chapter with general information and suggestions for improvement. It is not a directive and is not intended to direct the chapter in any manner. A chapter is not required to use or implement this information or suggestions. The decision on whether or how to use this information is solely that of the chapter.