



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

advocacy. counseling. education.

Feelings of People Who Have Been Raped

Fear

Victims of rape feel fear because of the threats made by the rapist, and fear of what may happen if they don't do as the rapist says. The rapist often threatens to harm or kill victims if they report the crime, telling them he will "Find them somewhere or somehow."

Victims may also fear society's reaction if they tell anyone. People who have been raped are afraid the blame will be placed on them, rather than on the rapist.

Fear of other men may occur because of what the rapist has done. It is easy to generalize and place all men in the same category.

Most victims of rape fear not being believed, especially if the victim knew the rapist or if the rapist is well-known in the community.

Guilt

Many times victims will internalize the mythology that the rape was somehow their fault. They have thoughts such as "I should have been wearing something else." "I should have locked the door." "It must have been something I did." It is important to remember that the rape is a *crime* committed against a victim and *the rapist is responsible* for the assault.

Many times victims will feel guilty that they didn't attempt to fight the rapist or they didn't fight hard enough. It is important to remember that staying alive is the most important thing and fighting the attacker may cause more harm or even death to the victim.

Some victims may feel that because they knew the rapist, they should have known he wasn't as he appeared. There is no way of knowing who is a rapist and who is not. Victims may have been with their assailant before and were never raped--how would they know that this time would be different?

Many victims have the idea that they would be able to resist or could take care of themselves if a rape were attempted. After an assault, self-doubt and guilt run rampant.

24-hour Crisis-Line (701)293-7273

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F: Education/Revised Handouts/Feelings of People Who Have Been Raped

Embarrassment

Many victims are embarrassed to talk about the physical details of the assault. They have been taught to believe their bodies and sexual activities are private and should not be discussed.

Talking to or telling anyone about the rape may be embarrassing and painful.

Many victims isolate themselves from family and friends because they're embarrassed to have such people find out about the assault. The victims may also fear being blamed by friends and family for the assault.

The medical exam may also be embarrassing. A victim's body is again exposed to others, which may be an emotionally painful experience.

Anxiety

Many victims feel extreme anxiety and often react by shaking. When they remember the assault, physical reactions such as shortness of breath, panic, shaking in fear, etc., are common. Nightmares occur frequently as well. It is important for a victim to realize they are safe and the physical reactions are occurring as a result of the trauma they experienced.

Questioning Why it Happened to Them

Many victims of rape wonder why the rapist chose them or what it was that separated them from others. Rapists decide to rape, and they plan the assault. However, they may not decide who the victim will be until the time of the attack. The decision may be based on who happens to be available, not because of whom she is, what she does, or how she dresses.

Anger

It is important to know that for many victims, there is anger about the events following their attack, just as there is anger about the rape itself. Victims experience anger at having to change their lifestyles, and they feel anger at being made to feel powerless. Anger can be a very appropriate reaction for victims of assault, because anger directed at the perpetrator can be the start of working through the assault. Counseling, reporting, and prosecution of the perpetrator may be ways to vent those feelings.