

# Prevention Pathways

## Online Courses

### Myths and Facts of Sexual Assault

**Myth: She got drunk. She deserved it.**

*Fact:* Getting drunk around people one does not know well is poor judgment, but it does not give a man the right to rape.

**Myth: Rape is sex.**

*Fact:* Rape is not sex. Sex is when two people agree to be together sexually. Rape is a crime that comes from the need to control, shame, and harm. Rapists use sexual violence as a weapon.

**Myth: Rapists are lonely, sexually unfulfilled men .**

*Fact:* Studies have shown that more than 60 percent of adult rapists were married, and almost all had normal sex lives with women at the time they committed the assault. Seventy-five percent of convicted rapists are white males, and most are under the age of 40. Sex offenders come from all income levels and they usually begin assaulting victims when they are teenagers. One-third are arrested for sexual assault before the age of 24.<sup>1</sup>

**Myth: Rape is a rare event that only happens to attractive young women who are dressed in sexy, tight, or revealing clothing .**

*Fact:* Anyone can be sexually assaulted. Rape victims include people of color, lesbians/gays, disabled people, and persons of every race, nationality, religion, and income level. Most sexual assault victims are wearing regular clothes like blue jeans or pajamas when they are assaulted, not clothing that could excite a rapist.

**Myth: Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers at night in dark alleys.**

*Fact:* Over 75 percent of all sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. 1Over half of assaults occur in the home or dorm room, and roughly 40 percent during the day.<sup>2</sup> Victims assaulted in their homes suffer increased shock and upset because the violation occurred at a place where they believed they were safe.

**Myth: A woman who truly resists can't be raped. If she didn't fight back, she must have wanted it.**

*Fact:* Most women are victims of date rape. They do not fight because they know the person assaulting them and cannot believe that someone they know and trust would rape them. Most rape victims are not able to act fast enough or with enough force to fight their assailant. Sometimes it may be dangerous to fight back.

**Myth: She went to his room after the party. She was asking for it.**

*Fact:* A young woman or a woman with little experience may believe a guy might really want to talk or listen to music. Agreeing to go to a man's room is not an agreement to have sex. The

partners must talk and agree to have sex and both partners may change their minds at any time.

**Myth: Women don't really know what they want. "She said no, but she meant yes."**

*Fact:* While sexual feelings may be confusing to a woman, if she says "no," she means "no." NO MEANS NO MEANS NO.

**Myth: She had sex with him before so it cannot be rape.**

*Fact:* If a woman does not agree to have sex with a man, even if she has in the past, that is rape. Even if he has bought her gifts, he cannot demand sex in return.

**Myth: If a woman drinks, she is more willing to be sexual.**

*Fact:* Women can drink for many reasons, including liking the taste or to relax. Drinking does not automatically mean a woman wants sex. Men who believe that alcohol makes a woman more willing to have sex also see a woman who drinks as *wanting* to have sex.<sup>3</sup>

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. "National Crime Victimization Survey." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, October 2001.
2. National Institute of Justice. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.
3. George, W.H.; Kelly, L.C.; and Lopez, P.A. Self-reported alcohol expectancies and post-drinking sexual inferences about women. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 1995, 25(2).

<http://www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways>