

This zine was compiled from other zines and handouts, only some of which I know how to refer you to:

- See No, Speak No, Hear No: Articles & Questions about Sexual Assault
- Sexual Assault in Activist Communities. Issue 36.1 of the Peak, reprinted February 2003. peak@voguelph.ca
www.peak.voguelph.ca

Other Recommended Resources:

- Greenzine #12: accounts of dealing with sexual assault from awesome radicals. You can find this thru www.microcosmpublishing.com
- Philly's Pissed/Philly Stands Up: Two groups working together in Philadelphia to fight sexual assault in the radical community. www.phillyspissed.net
- Antioch College's Sexual Offense Protection Policy
Great texts, especially on CONSENT!
www.antioch-college.edu/Campus/sopp/index.html
- Different Kind of Dude Fest: The website to this event which took place two years ago in Washington, DC is still up and has a lot of good texts. Recommended: differentkindofdudetest.dead-city.org/reading.html

FIGHTING SEXUAL ASSAULT

What Can I Do?

Plenty,
FRIEND!



INTRODUCTORY TEXTS
FROM CONSENT TO MYTH-BUSTING
TO RESPONSES FROM
RADICAL COMMUNITIES

A Note from the Compiler:

I compiled the texts in this zine from various other zines and articles I've accumulated over the years around issues related to sexual assault and more explicitly sexual assault in radical communities. Sexual assault is a huge problem that is talked about neither in society at large nor in radical communities (to a large extent). With this zine, I hope to provide radicals with a good range of introductory texts to educate themselves to become better allies or supporters to survivors of sexual assault and to learn what measures we as individuals can take to prevent and fight sexual assault. This zine by no means covers the full range of issues around sexual assault and supporting survivors, but it is a start.

Sexual assault happens in all communities and to all types of people. Unfortunately many myths around sexual assault perpetuate silence and make it seem as if only heterosexual women experience sexual assault. I have tried to include texts that do not use exclusionary language and refrain from perpetuating these myths. I have also tried to include texts that bust myths around sexual assault in Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans/Queer/Intersex (LGBTQI) communities. Read all these texts critically, and take note of shortcomings in language and realize we have a long way to go to support ALL survivors of sexual assault.

I have also tried to include texts with some examples of how radical communities have tried to combat sexual assault. Their struggles have not always been successful, but their work gives us some good examples of approaches we can take and mistakes we should avoid. I have also included a sample e-mail/letter to demonstrate a way of communicating problems and demands to a perpetrator.

I want to emphasize that these texts may be highly TRIGGERING (meaning they may bring unpleasant memories to the surface). Please read in a safe space and do whatever you need to do to feel safe.

Let's get radical!

Splitz

You can contact me at tanzbare_revolution@gmx.at

we talked for a long time and it was surprisingly good dialog. he admitted what had happened and had full realized it after the email that i had sent. he had been unaware of it and had been so shocked that he began to familiarize himself with rape and other women's issues- became more aware with what it is- how the dynamics can work. it's too much to write what was exchanged. nothing that he said could negate the fact that the situation occurred but the conversation was a fucking milestone in my healing. some kind of beginnings of a resolution. something happened during that 4+ hours that lifted the shit off my back. i didn't want to beat his ass, had asked my friends to respect my wishes and had waited a long time for this meeting to take place. it was worth it but i don't want to insinuate that this outcome resolved it for me. it isn't some kind of formula that if used, will in anyway rectify any rape, ever. every rape committed is situationally different and this is how i chose to deal with it and i have yet to even confront the dude from the first time. i can't outline how to approach other people who sexually violated anyone but can say that positive support and understanding is a key point in trying to help. listening and not trying to really question one's experience about what really rape is very important. there's nothing like a dumbass saying that your experience what otherwise because it was done by a friend or a person in the community- not some wildass on the street that you didn't know.

its so hard to sit here and write about this when it's so fucked and still very confusing and depressing to think about. the only thing that i can really emphasize again is to seek and/or provide a supportive environment/ community and to be communicative. honesty is an amazing thing and listening is equally as important. those things literally saved my life and my mind. i'm not embarrassed to talk about it anymore and not afraid to question peoples exterior motives. am able to get my toughness and say, "hey wait, no, this is not gonna happen on things get out of control. fuck it- somehow i'm moving on and am trying to pull something positive out of this. to provide my experience as a possible means for anyone that might apply to and to give strength for anyone that anyone that has had to deal with any of this. this is just over, proofreading it, talking about it, reading it and then typing out this final draft- something has happened and it means alot to me.

DAVE,

if you want to know why i have been avoiding you, (i saw you in portland but would rather not have) than maybe you should be schooled in consensual sex. being drunk and whatever happened was not something that i would have preferred to happen.

i have tried to play it off for months that it was just something stupid that happened but in reality it was a violation of my personal space and body. i have tried to think that because you were younger than me and less experienced that you didn't have a full understanding or the knowledge but fuck that. for personal reference, i do not go running around calling people rapists but this shit has bothered me enough and i feel that at least you should know why i'd rather not see you again in my life.

i don't have the time to deal with this kind of shit and feel poorly about myself. that fact that you keep trying to communicate with me makes me sick in my stomach and i wish that you would stop forever and just leave me alone.

condoms don't make sex consensual.

just because you didn't beat me doesn't make it okay.
when you came around afterwards and i still kissed you-
doesn't mean that i really wanted to.

i felt really uncomfortable with the circumstance and just wanted you to get the fuck out of town.

so in conclusion, i feel that you are ignorant in your actions and perhaps you should think before you put your scrawny dick in someone else- male or female.

FUCK OFF- CAROLINE

time flew by and i was doing alot of shit and working on "healing" myself. i realized that i had to work on REALLY communicating with EVERYONE, whether it be with friends or sexual partners. needed to surround myself with folks that would do the same and that were supportive. i was/am very lucky to have that because otherwise i'd still be stuck in depression. this kind of depression is very dangerous (not to discredit other types of trauma) because it is so personal and so taboo to talk about in our society. i'm not a fucking victim or a survivor- i personally find those terms belittling and problematic. i don't have a word for it myself and don't want anything tagged onto it. almost a year and a half later, we're on tour and pull up to a house in west philly where the show is gonna be. i see the shadowy figure that i instinctively know is him, leaving quickly from the house. a few questions are asked to the awesome ladies there confirms my suspicions- he's been hanging out in town. i'm freaking out again, the old horrible feelings coming back, pulling me back into morbidity. except that i'm more confident now, more able to express myself, ten times more tough than i ever was. after the show, that luckily was at a sweetass ladies house that made me feel so empowered, i went looking for him. two ladies accompanied me to the squat where he was staying and all four of us walked over to the abandoned oil refinery. he looked scared, like we were bringing him over there to beat his ass and i was pretty terrified myself. i had brought my mace with me if for some reason he was going to be agro about all of this. when we seperated from the others, he blurted out, "do you really think that i did that to you?" i remained calm and answered, "hey listen, we're gonna talk about this in a non-confrontational manner okay? i didn't come here to beat you up." that set the tone and fortunately de-escalated any situation that he might've felt going on.

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- These requirements for consent do not restrict with whom the sexual activity may occur, the type of sexual activity that occurs, the props/toys/tools that are used, the number of persons involved, the gender(s) or gender expressions of persons involved.

This is mostly taken from Antioch's consent' policy.

months passed and kasey and i went traveling. in portland, in a ~~guy~~ market, buying beer, HE comes in. i have never been so frightened in my life. i started shaking, tugging at jimbo's arm while frantically whispering, "we gotta get out of here, we gotta go." the rest of the trip was overshadowed by the fear of running into him again and the thing is that he had no clue. no idea what kind of damage that had occurred to my psyche, to my life in all regards. i just told kasey and jimbo that he was some boy that, i didn't want to deal with.

i get back to gainesville and my friend is over visiting, asking me questions about my trip. i mention about seeing the kid and she senses my uncomfortableness. asks questions lots of them and she senses my uncomfortableness. asks questions i don't understand why you're making excuses. asks questions or life experience makes you're making excuses, " caroline, RAPE." it seems so vivid when i remember this- that's age, wood grain, trying to block out her words, me staring at the "that's rape," i felt so relieved that someone had finally said it since i refused to believe it myself. i freaked out but in a different way than i had been- it was the first time. it's shocking but at least the beginnings for the words some sort of healing but at least the beginnings for the a "dirty" secret. that conversation changed my life. made me realize what was going on in my crazed life/mind. made i emailed the kid, telling him to stay away from me and stated figuring things out.

As a white male anarchist who is well traveled and widely known throughout the country, I feel that I am ultimately responsible for perceptions of my character and my past. I do not want any of you as my friends or allies to feel as if you are so close to me that you automatically assume I have moved beyond the stories of my past that I have just unfurled to you. For I myself, would be a fool to draw such conclusions. I, like most of my closest of male friends, in the radical community are all in some way or another complicit in the disgusting cycle of abuse. We are born into a society that perpetuates it. We are force fed 13 years of indoctrination of dominant/subordinate gender roles in the classroom. We are witnesses to it in the household, the workplace, in social circles, in popular media, in sports, in entertainment. In every sphere of life, public and private, these patronizing, demeaning behavioral patterns are repeated time and again ad nauseam. Just because you've read Emma Goldman's autobiography doesn't mean you're a saint. Attending a workshop or two on domestic abuse doesn't mean that I have any remote concept of the harassment and fear a woman encounters walking down the street on a daily basis.

I am nearing thirty now, and I have only just begun to scratch the surface of the staggering amount of work and education that I need to get through before I can truly call myself an ally. So please when you see me in your town, when you communicate with me via mail or computer, please bring all of your assumptions about the quality of my character along. I'll respect you far greater in the long run if you speak frankly with me today. I'll appreciate your friendship more ten years down the road if you critique it today by calling me on my irresponsibility. All I want you to expect is honesty, sincerity, the truth and a commitment from me to you of challenge, and dedication to making myself and all of the others around us a better, more responsible, compassionate population. I expect nothing less of you.

(4)

SUPPORTING SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

When someone has been raped or assaulted, they obviously need a great deal of support from the people around them as well as from people like counsellors, the police, doctors and so on. Many people simply do not know how to help somebody through the trauma of rape or sexual assault, and so they become frustrated and bewildered and feel that they are in some way failing the person they care about. These feelings can sometimes be transmitted to that person, making it even harder for them to cope with their experiences and often leaving them with even more feelings of guilt and confusion.

Every person responds differently to abuse, although there are certain feelings that are common, such as fear, distress, humiliation, anger, confusion, numbness and guilt. The feelings a person has may vary from week to week, day to day - even minute to minute; what is important is that someone who has been attacked is allowed to experience their feelings without fear of having them invalidated or dismissed. It is important that they feel they have people who will allow them to talk and will try to understand their needs rather than assuming that others know best and rushing them to "get over it". It is essential that they know they are believed, and that they be allowed to begin to rebuild their life at their own pace. The dominant feature of sexual abuse is that it is forced on a person against their will, and it is an act of violence and violation regardless of how much visible "violence" is used; it takes away a person's control, and so it is vital that someone who has been through this be in control of their journey to recovery. People who have been raped or sexually abused need to rebuild feelings of safety, trust, control and self-worth, all things which are often lost through an assault.

The following are some tips on "DOs" and "DON'Ts" to help you to help the person you love through the trauma of rape or sexual assault; the responses of those near to a survivor can occasionally make things more difficult for him or her, and that is something nobody wants. The focus should always be on the survivor - never try to make them do anything they don't feel comfortable with. Also try to remember that you need support too, in order to continue supporting the survivor; counselling is available for secondary survivors too. This information is taken from a leaflet provided by the Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service, UK.

DON'T CRITICISE

Don't criticise a survivor of abuse for being where they were at the time, for not resisting more or screaming, for not talking about it earlier...or for anything else. Anybody anywhere can be a victim of abuse, regardless of age, gender, looks, dress and so on. Regardless of circumstances no means no, and nobody deserves to be raped; myths about women "asking for it" or men being "unable to help themselves" create a burden of guilt on the survivor in the first place, and they may already feel partly responsible. Any criticism of their handling of the situation, either during the attack or afterwards, simply

adds to that guilt, and it is important that the blame is placed firmly where it belongs - with the person who committed the assault.

DO UNDERSTAND

Listen and try to understand why they were unable to prevent it from happening. They may have been frozen by fear, or have been unsuspecting and trusting, or they may have been threatened or physically attacked and may have realistically feared worse would happen if they resisted. You wouldn't expect somebody who has been mugged to have been able to prevent it.

DO LISTEN TO THEIR REASONS

Listen to their reasons if they didn't tell you immediately. They may have been scared of your reaction, they may have felt ashamed or embarrassed to tell you, they may have been trying to protect you from the upset of knowing, they may have chosen to think it through first, or to talk to people less personally involved.

DO TRY TO HELP DISTINGUISH BETWEEN "IF ONLYS" AND GUILT

Try to help them distinguish between wishing it had never happened, in terms of wishing they hadn't been there at that time, or said what they said, and so on, and it being their fault it happened. Everyone has a basic human right to be free from threat, harassment or attack.

DON'T OVER-SIMPLIFY

Try not to over-simplify what has happened by saying it isn't very bad, "never mind", "forget it". Let them say exactly how they feel and allow them to work through it in their own time.

DO REASSURE THEM YOU'RE THERE

Reassure them that you will give them your support, and allow them time to work it through. Make it clear that you will be around to talk to now or in the future, and help them to trust you not to push them into expressing things before they are ready. Ask if they know any other friends they would find it easier to talk to, or if they would like to see a Rape Counsellor, and offer to help them organise this if they'd like you to, but remember not to pressurise them into anything they don't feel ready for.

DON'T TAKE CONTROL

Sexual abuse makes people feel invaded, changed and out of control; try to imagine how this feels, and try to do what helps them rather than what makes you feel better - listen to what they want. It is crucial that they be able to make their own decisions and regain influence over what happens in their lives in order to rebuild trust and strength. It is common for loved ones, themselves distressed, to step in and be too protective, or to treat them differently and make their decisions for them, all of which can add to their frustration. Ask them how they want to be helped, and in trying to do this you'll help rebuild their trust.

As I sat in that room and listened to her recollect her account of our encounter I grasped desperately to my long since forgotten memories of the occasion and drew a blank. I knew where I differed from her story as well as where we mutually agreed. What will haunt me for the rest of my life is the gray area that I don't recall, but could very much be a reality. One could spend an eternity picking through the inner details of said situation and one hundred different folks could interpret things one hundred different ways. Interpretation is not something I concern myself with these days. It is selfish, it is accusatory, and it is a means of challenging an individual's inner most emotions and putting them on trial. It is a dangerous, counter-productive, slippery slope that leads only to further emotional and psychological damage to the abused and clouds the very real issue of accountability the assaulter needs to work through. I have been an assaulter before; I am working to ensure that I never am again.

Reflecting back now, a year and a half since the mediation there are still many tough questions that I'm asking myself about my public and private perceptions of this woman and of my reaction to all that she has brought forth. Prior to being notified of her desire for mediation, I rarely thought of her or our brief relations. When I did occasionally see her on the streets or in a public setting thoughts would run through my head of how I thought she was disturbed or psychotic. I never shared these sentiments with others, but undeniably harbored them within. While I sat across a narrow room from her with four others at the mediation, I wondered to myself of the validity of her story? Had I really committed all of those horrendous acts, wouldn't I have noticed? Wasn't I socially conscious and aware to a degree that I can distinguish wrong from right? I realize now the unbelievable insensitivity I was displaying by validating myself in her darkest of hours. She was spilling out years of fury and anger and outrage at me and I was internally comforting myself through the entirety of it.

As recently as the beginning of this year, I knowingly and selfishly violated her once again. I made a conscious effort to stay in close proximity to her at a public gathering after I swore to her that I would immediately remove myself from any such situation; as one of her demands of me, a year prior. So, for four years now I have sexually, mentally, emotionally and vocally violated this woman through my actions, my remarks and my assumptions. What in the world have I learned about myself and my activities one might wonder?

I have learned that all men, regardless of their social and political education have the capacity and ability to victimize and assault women every day in ways that we can only begin to imagine. We do it with our vocabulary, our gestures, our mannerisms and our body language. We do it in subtle ways that we never even realize. We do it in blatant ways that we champion as asserting our manliness. We do it with those we are in relationships with. We do it to our mothers and sisters and daughters. We do it professionally through workplace discrimination and in the political sphere. We do it socially in our friendships and acquaintances. In short, there are very few moments when we aren't violating half of the population of the world. I'm guilty of this behavior, more than my fair share of the time.

Gradually, I'm working through my own inappropriateness, while stepping up to the plate and challenging those around me to take a closer look at their own shortcomings. I believe to be truly engaged in the healing process, one must be responsible not only to themselves and their immediate community, but indeed to the entirety of those they come in contact with on a daily basis. Just as I work on my own behavior by evaluating and reevaluating my dialogue and interaction, I study intently the activity and communication of those around me. I mentally compare my movement and conversation with the deficiencies I witness in my co-workers, my neighbors as well as those I pass on the street. Am I much better than the sleazy businessman? What about the drunken frat guy? How am I any different than these unsavory individuals? This is just one of countless exercises that one who is coming to grips with their behavior can engage in on a daily basis. Healing takes on many different faces and forms. Indeed, there are as many differing techniques for accountability as there are individuals working through their own internal destructive behavioral patterns. The only truly, wrong way to begin the process of healing is to pretend as if there is no problem. No matter who you might be, don't ever doubt that there isn't room for improvement within yourself.

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In the fall of '98, just a few weeks before I became involved with my current partner, I had a very brief primarily physical relationship, with a woman six years my junior. She was a freshman at the university and was starting to show up at events and meetings regularly. I thought highly of her as she asked difficult questions and challenged all of us greatly on issues of practicality and history. We began hanging out very casually at first then became somewhat intimate shortly thereafter. One night early on in this period I stayed at her dorm room and we engaged in heavy petting and extreme physical contact. I envisioned what had happened rather naively as casual and thought nothing much of it. A few days later I saw her walking down the street as I was biking past. I rode up beside her and started talking and realized that she was completely ignoring me. At first, I thought she was playing some kind of a joke, so I laughed and rode away thinking it was an odd encounter. After this happened a couple of times more I realized that something was most definitely wrong, but really had no indication what.

Although I was concerned with what was going on, I honestly didn't read into it hardly at all. I was entering the early stages of what became a long-term relationship and my mind was caught up with that. As time wore on I thought less and less of that night and of the ensuing situation as days spilled into weeks and months and years and then my past and inability to effectively and responsibly deal with it came crashing back into my life, nearly three years later. Without reiterating what has been spelled out time and time again on the internet, at conferences, in national publications and even in the pages of this very zine; shit went down big time here in Richmond a couple of summers back. A serial sexual assaulter became exposed and the entire anarchist and punk rock communities on the East Coast became embroiled in a long, drawn out affair that has yet to be fully resolved and in all likelihood probably never will.

As the East Coast situation unraveled over the course of several months, many women intimately or indirectly involved came out vocally in opposition to the overly macho infighting and posturing being carried out exclusively by elder statesmen of the anarchist community on the internet. In time more voices rose to the surface from women, who felt very frustrated and alienated, with the lack of support they had received when they came public with news of similar instances of sexual misconduct. Victim's felt the climate created the appropriate timing for them to come public, with their own stories and histories of being abused, manipulated and sexually assaulted, and the stories did indeed start to come forth. I was living in Florida for the winter and felt about as far removed from things as one possibly could have. In one moment that all changed.

I received word via the telephone that someone from my past had come forward and informed my friends of a situation where she felt I sexually violated and took advantage of her. My mind raced through many faces and fading memories of kissing and sex games at parties. I thought of one or two date long relations. I thought of sleepovers and of my sexual past and I was scrambling trying to put a finger on what I perceived to be at issue. Finally I was contacted and told that the woman who was coming forward was the same person who had suddenly stopped talking to me after the night we spent together years earlier. She was requesting an intervention. I returned back to Richmond early from my extended stay in Florida to attend the mediated session. The mediation was carried out by the woman who was first approached by the woman from my past, and a friend of mine of many years who was approved in addition to the other mediator. My partner and her partner were present as well.

On the night of the mediation, the walk to the house where it was to take place seemed to take an eternity despite the brief fifteen minutes that it was. My partner, Y, walked beside me and let me know that she was there not just because she expected me to be accountable and responsible, but very much because she was standing as an ally and supporter to a fellow woman who had been victimized by a man. My nerves were shot. The lumps in my throat were keeping me from breathing well. I was sweating intensely and shaking uncontrollably and then we began. Looking intently in the eye of the woman who was confronting me, while listening carefully to her every word, I desperately tried to recreate that night in my head. She spoke with clarity and conviction as if the past two and a half years were only last week. I responded when asked to, saying little and being as aware as possible of my motions and the way I was holding myself. I had never sat in a room with someone who very clearly and obviously hated and despised me. I don't think I've ever felt lower in my life.

DO HELP THEM TO FEEL SAFE

Help them to feel safe and take part in things again, but only at their own pace and in ways they feel are best. Knowing they can talk to you about feeling unsafe and can ask for your companionship when they need it, will be reassuring as they tackle difficult things.

DON'T FRIGHTEN THEM

Don't come up behind them or touch them unexpectedly or in a way that reminds them of the assault. They may want to be held and comforted, or prefer not to be until they feel safe - ask what feels best. Don't feel offended if they find it difficult to be close, emotionally or, if you are their partner, sexually, after the assault. It is not that they feel you might assault them but that it may recall their feelings of violation and fear. Encourage them to say what is comfortable and safe and how they want to spend their time with you. If you find that there is an emotional distance between you following the assault, try not to blame them or put pressure on them to forget it quickly. Seek support for yourself from someone who may understand - feeling guilt or pressure will only make it harder for them to work through the experience. Feeling that you are listening and responding on the other hand will help them to re-establish feelings of closeness and trust.

DON'T DIRECT ANGER AT THEM

Don't direct the anger and frustration you are likely to feel about the assault at the survivor; they will already be worried that what has happened to them will hurt those close to them. Reassure them that you know it isn't their fault, and if you do feel anger, make it very clear that it is directed towards those who committed the assault and not them. Remember that threatening to take the law into your own hands is not helpful; it can make them feel even more unsafe, make them distressed to see you so upset, or could worry them that you'll get into trouble or get hurt. It can also make them feel out of control of the situation and that their needs are again being ignored. You may need to ask friends or other trusted people for support and ideas about how to deal with your own understandable feelings of anger and frustration.

DON'T BLAME YOURSELF

Don't blame yourself for what happened because you weren't with them, hadn't protected them etc. The responsibility lies solely with those who committed the assault.

DON'T SPEAK FOR THEM

Don't speak for them unless they specifically want you to. When friends, the police, the doctor etc ask how they feel, always let them speak for themselves. If they want to talk to someone who isn't emotionally close to them, make it clear that they can choose whether or not you are with them.

DO ENCOURAGE A MEDICAL CHECK-UP

Remember that whether or not they choose to report the assault to the police, they should have a medical check-up, and may need pregnancy, HIV or STD tests, although again, remember not to put pressure on them.

How was it possible that the kids who looked the most outrageous, who posed as the most defiant, who were anti-everything were so much more sensitive and aware and politically correct than the honor roll students, star athletes and college bound kids who lived just down the street from us? Well, despite all of the propaganda and song lyrics and cries for equality and self-empowerment, they weren't. It was all a self-congratulatory, posturing crock of shit. The kids in the underground community were just as prone to misconduct, abusive behavior, degrading attitudes and inappropriate comments as any other segment of youth, if not to an even worse degree. The bands, promoters, record store employees, zinesters, label owners and on and on were overwhelmingly young, white males perpetuating the same widespread societal relations of men over womyn that have been carrying on for generations.

In time I moved out on my own, into a punk house with two older guys who had been around for an eternity, I felt respected and honored that these elder statesmen of the scene would give me the opportunity of being able to live with them. On the weekends friends and transient youth would spill into our home from near and far. We would walk down the street to see a show and invite people back to the house to hang out and party well into the night. Oftentimes younger teenage girls would show up and be exposed to a flurry of demeaning behavior that was the norm at our house. At the time I truly didn't think anything of the way I carried myself or the way I communicated with womyn was out of the ordinary. I believed it was just the way things were. I believed that guys unconsciously preyed upon women, and that these were just customary courting practices. To this day I will occasionally pull out a home video I have of that house from so long ago. Looking back on the young, uneducated, kid that I once was terrifies myself all these years later.

Over the years in the beloved punk community of my youth I was involved in dozens of relationships of all variations. Long-term, deeply committed nurturing relationships. Two month long mini relationships, casual sex relationships and one-night stands. Open relationships. Closed relationships. I suppose I was no different than most other young folks exploring who they were and what works for them in their most inter-personal of relations. I challenged myself, I grew, and I learned the importance of communication, of trust, of how to listen, how to read one's body language. I developed an instinctual nature to pick up on when something wasn't right, when I had fucked up, when I had gone too far. I really believed that I had matured and grown enough as an individual that issues of sexism and abuse and misconduct no longer applied to me, or so I thought.

I traveled extensively and eventually moved down the road to Lexington, Kentucky and a year later further still down Interstate 64 to Richmond, Virginia. In Richmond, although still peripherally involved in the punk subculture I became deeply emerged in the local radical community of Food Not Bombs and the General Strike Collective. Through my work with those organizations I came in contact with lots of young, impressionable VCU students who were just becoming aware of the world outside of their suburban hometowns of northern Virginia and on their own for the very first time. As most folks do, I began to date within my social circle.

In my first relationship in Richmond, as a twenty-one year old, I had a nearly year long relationship with a sixteen/seventeen year old. Although I caught a lot of flack for it at the time, I felt comfortably certain that I was very conscious and aware of perceived power dynamics between the two of us. With years of reflection behind me I can see things a lot clearer these days. I issued ultimatums and thinly veiled threats about ending our relationship and even friendship if certain activities carried on. I utilized guilt trips, shit talking and vocally aggressive behavioral patterns anytime my partner would become involved with someone else. With time we split up and gradually drifted further apart over the years.

I've spent a lot of time coming to grips with my authoritative mannerisms in that and other relationships of days gone past and I'd like to think that the person I was then is dead and gone. I'd like to think that I respectfully and consciously evaluate my day to day interactions with women, both/in interpersonal relations and in daily exchanges and grade my behavior accurately and fairly. I study friends, co-workers, neighbors and strangers regularly. I notice their body language, their tone of voice, their jokes and generally feel I can gauge what type of private person they might be. I wonder if anyone ever does this with me, and if so what impressions they're left with?

DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH OF YOURSELF

They may need different types of support from different people; no one person can do everything for them. It can help you too to know that they can go to other people for support if they choose to. Sometimes, a counsellor or trusted friends and colleagues can help in ways those closest to them can't. You won't be able to magically make everything better straight away, but by showing them that you believe them, that you don't blame them, and that you want to help them regain control of their life, by listening, respecting their feelings and views and showing you care, you can make a great difference and help them begin to heal again.

★ Symptoms often present in Rape Trauma

- Intense fear, helplessness, or horror.
- Repeated and distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Unable to distinguish between past events and reality. Such incidents are often called "flashbacks"
- Distressing and or frightening dreams about the event.
- Associating various words, happenings, or "triggers" to the actual event which then causes a "flashback".
- Avoidance of anything that may "trigger" a flashback including not talking about the attack itself.
- Pretending it never happened, and an inability to recall anything about the attack, "denial".
- A feeling of numbness, detachment or "unrealness" about everything.
- A lack of emotion or inability to feel love or care about anything.
- A feeling of depression and isolation.
- A change in sleep patterns. More often or not the ability to sleep or stay asleep for any length of time.
- A lack of concentration.
- Avoidance of being touched, and shying away from loved ones. Sudden movements may startle.
- A lack of trust in anyone, even close family or partners.
- More irritable than usual. Outbursts of anger and crying. Mood swings.
- A feeling of low self esteem and confidence.
- A feeling of being dirty, or disgusting.
- Deep embarrassment or shame. Sometimes self blame for events.
- Bitterness and morbid hatred of the perpetrator, with a preoccupation of how to harm or humiliate them.
- Loss of appetite or a change in eating patterns.

Long Way to Go

A close friend of mine made the following observation during a recent conversation on abusive behavior within radical and subcultural ranks: "Isn't it strange that as many victims of sexual assault that there are in our community, that virtually no one ever comes out publicly as having been an abuser?" My mind searched back through the years, through all of the accusations, all of the scene splitting feuds. I thought of an old friend and popular scenerunner who sexually violated my then thirteen-year-old sister. I thought of the son of a well-respected businessman who attacked my ex-girlfriend in a hotel room and threatened to cause her father severe loss of business if she ever said a word. I thought of a two year long, major East Coast situation that has permanently scarred too many women to count, wrecked long-term friendships and played out publicly at conferences and demos and worst of all on Internet chat room sites. I thought of all of the years zig zagging across the country in and out of towns, big and small hearing countless stories of violent, degrading, misogynist behavior. I thought of my friends, my co-workers, my family and lastly I thought of myself.

I reflect back on my teenage years and of my grand quest to lose my virginity, late nights of plotting and scheming and boosting my confidence and machismo via a bottle of vodka. I thought of awkward moments in the back seats of cars and of midnight walks through secluded parks. "I promise we'll be together forever if you make this happen. I love you I would never do anything to take advantage of you." I would do and say anything to create a potential situation and if that meant pushing the boundary too far, then I would do that as well. Looking back after nearly a dozen years I can still remember the faces of the women I abused. Scarily, I now know that the way I was behaving was not an exception in their lives, but most definitely the norm.

I looked at my quest for sexual companionship as a big grand adventure with no consequences whatsoever. Taking advantage of someone who was inebriated was common and often. Irresponsible, unprotected sex was so big deal. If someone became pregnant I simply lied to my parents about a gambling bet I had made that landed me in trouble. Once I got the money out of them, it was off to the abortion clinic and poof, problem solved. No place to have sex, no big deal, let's break into that abandoned store down the street or do it in your bedroom with your kids asleep beside us. I lived life like there was no tomorrow for a very destructive three-year span. Today when a fifteen year old kid down the street talks to me of all the bitches he has and of his exploits, I feel disgusted and sickened knowing that I was no better in my youth than he is today.

In the early 90's, when I was a teenager, I discovered the local, underground punk music community and quickly immersed myself in it. A whole world of concepts and opportunities presented themselves to me. I learned of Anarchism and class politics. I learned of institutional racism and the prison industry. I learned of non-violence and respect for all life, human and non-human. I learned of a movement of kids all across the country who were my age and who abstained from drugs and alcohol and looked after and supported one another. Through my new favorite band, Endpoint, I learned of sexual misconduct, patriarchy, emotional and psychological abuse and of rape. Unlimited possibilities were presenting themselves to me and I was eager to swallow them all whole.

For the longest time after my indoctrination into my new community I looked back on my old friends and my old life as being a very tiny percentage of what the vast majority of the population was like. They were backwards; demeaning, ignorant people who didn't know any better and likely never would. I now had all of the answers and was a socially conscious punk rocker who was obviously of a much higher moral and ethical standard than the jocks and rednecks of my high school that I despised equally.

Rape and assault recovery. The process of healing is a long and arduous one. It is an emotional journey that can be variously filled with fear, distrust, hope, pain, longing, anger and sadness. At different points during this healing journey, different tools may be needed to help overcome the next barrier to reach the next plateau.

From Victim to Survivor Indeed the passage of time does not appear to ease the impact that assault and rape has upon the lives of women and the trauma may continue to influence many aspects of the woman's life even though the abuse may have occurred many years previously. Feelings such as intense shame and low self-esteem frequently interfere with the completion of important life tasks such as obtaining an education, establishing a nurturing relationship, and/or starting and raising a family. Such negative feelings can often lead women with a history of assault and rape into life situations and/or relationships that result in revictimization.

Often the shame, guilt, and pain that women experience as a result of assault and rapery are found hidden in substance abuse or other destructive behaviours. Many women experience actual physical symptoms that can become debilitating over time. Anxiety and fear continue for many of them. Such anxieties may take the form of panic attacks, sleep disturbances, and/or constant hypervigilance. Women can suffer from uncontrollable flashbacks to the abuse situations and scenarios. Depression is one of the most common aftereffects. Chronic depression can result in persistent suicidal ideation and suicide attempts. Many women describe themselves as numb, not living, or not real. Most women survivors of assault and rapery believe themselves to be very different from other people because of their experiences. The inherent need and pressure for secrecy around that has isolated them from others, perpetuating their distress and shame. Most believe they will remain alone isolated and frightened.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Identifying the myths

MYTH: Sexual assault is driven by sexual desire.
FACT: Studies show that most sexual assaults are not impulsive acts. They are often planned in advance. Sexual assault is about the exertion of power and violence rather than about sexual desire. Sexual desires and impulses can be controlled. Sexual outlets can be found that don't involve assaulting another person.

MYTH: Rapists can be cured by castration.
FACT: Individuals choose to rape others. People are not born with an uncontrollable tendency to rape. Violent behaviours are learned, and offenders are responsible for engaging in them. Castration simply won't solve the problem; furthermore, most but not all rapists are male.

MYTH: Rapists are sick.
FACT: There is nothing remarkable that distinguishes how sex offenders look or act from people who are not sex offenders. Although the behaviour of sex offenders is disturbing, the offenders have control over their behaviour and often plan the assault.

MYTH: Sex trade workers, women living on the street, and women with addictions are at greater risk of sexual assault because of their lifestyle choices.
FACT: Sex trade workers and homeless women may be more at risk of being sexually assaulted, because of the links between class hierarchy and patriarchy, BUT sexual assault happens because of the choices of the perpetrator, not because of anything the survivor does. Survivors are not responsible for being sexually assaulted regardless of their employment, where they live, their economic status, and so forth. This myth is a form of victim-blaming.

MYTH: Women who come from especially patriarchal cultures and nations are more likely to be sexually assaulted.
FACT: Almost every nation, and many cultures, are patriarchal. Sexual assault is just as likely to happen in any of these, regardless of the culture of a region, nation, or community. This myth stems from the racist idea that women of colour (e.g. Arab women, Black women, Latina women, Asian women) are more oppressed by men than are white women.

MYTH: Sexual assaults most often happen by strangers.
FACT: Although this does happen, more than half of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows and trusts. Offenders include partners, dates, acquaintances, family members, caregivers and others. When the offender is known, it is more difficult to name the assault.

MYTH: Transgendered and transsexual people are prone to raping others.
FACT: This is a transphobic myth perpetuated by our transphobic culture - for example, the movie Silence of the Lambs. Some rapists are transgendered and transsexual, but

MYTH: Sexual assault only happens to women.
FACT: Sexual assault does happen more often to females but it also happens to males. About 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys are sexually assaulted before they are 18 years old. It is

Sample Confrontational E-mail/List of Demands:

(this text comes from an e-mail I unfortunately felt the need to write recently. If you would like to see the same sample in german, I can provide you with that as well.)

the person to whom this is addressed,

on (the date) you came on to me and sexually harassed me, and therefore we cannot be friends any more. i didn't consent to what you did, no matter what responses you did or did not notice. your actions were totally unacceptable. from previous encounters you should have known that i am NOT interested in you. that did not change and never will change! you tried on several occasions to kiss me, etc., which i always (too) politely avoided. although you should have known that i want nothing from you, you exploited our friendship to get into my bed. you also exploited the fact that i live in the , a public space, in the sense that you could simultaneously enter a public space and my living space. you deceived me that you wanted to crash here. i believed that and allowed it because we were friends, and i thought you knew that i want nothing from you. i only consented that you could sleep in my room. i did not consent to be harassed. you harassed me although (or probably because) i was drunk. it's especially nauseating to me that you harassed me when i was drunk and tired and in no condition to either give consent or fight you off. you never asked me for consent, and i never gave it. i did not give you consent first through non-verbal and finally thru verbal communication. it's clear to me that you are a moron and cannot understand when a woman in NOT interested in you. you need to learn what consent is. attached are texts that explain what consent is.

contact between us is over. i want neither to see you nor to hear from you. should we happen to meet in a neutral space, you should avoid me and under no circumstance should you talk to me. more detailed instructions about places the person should avoid. please make reflections and work on yourself, so that you never commit any further non-consensual sex acts. learn to control yourself, and always ask for consent.

although i said here that i don't want to have any more contact with you, i think it's ok if you answer this e-mail if you have questions about what you can do differently in the future. maybe i will reply, or perhaps someone else will explain those things to you, it's too difficult for me. i do not want to further discuss what happened. you make me nauseous. you are an asshole, and i hope you realize how wrong your actions were, you fucking creep.

What One Man Can Do to Help Stop Rape

Realize that developing emotional strengths and skills is something all men need to do.

RECOGNIZE AND INTERRUPT SEXUAL ASSAULT

Assault can occur anywhere: on the street, at a party, a football game, or the workplace-any time, day or night. It ranges from forced sexual intercourse to any unwanted touching, and also includes verbal abuse. Many actions learned as normal, such as a "friendly" pat on the behind, are in fact assaultive if they don't involve the consent of all parties. Be aware of women being assaulted physically or verbally. Notice what is happening and who is involved. Intervene with comments, questions, disruptive noises, or physically if necessary. Asking if a woman wants help is important. Responding to a call for help is essential. Getting involved makes the violence visible and may stop a rape. Acknowledging a responsibility to interrupt assaults does not imply that women need male protection. The belief that women need men as protectors from other men only reinforces the myth that women are powerless, and puts an unhealthy burden on men. Do not expect a woman you assist to trust you any more than her assailant.

SUPPORT ANTI-RAPE ORGANIZATIONS

There are many people working against rape. These organizations deserve your support.

THERE CAN BE NO FREE MEN UNTIL THERE ARE FREE WOMEN!

currently estimated by the FBI that one out of ten men are victims of adult sexual assault. One out of three women are victims of sexual assault at some point in their lives.

Transsexual people are also sexually assaulted
MYTH: Most sexual offenders are Black men.

FACT: Over 90% of sexual assaults occur between people of the same ethnic, cultural, or racialized background. Many people in the United States wrongly believe that the majority of rapes are committed by Black men against white women. This racist myth was created after Black slaves in the US were freed. It was used as an excuse to lynch Black men. Rape happens in all communities and most rapes in the United States are committed by white men. But, Black men are still put in jail more often for rape.

MYTH: The bigger, more masculine or masculine identified person is always the abusive partner in a domestic violence relationship.

FACT: Size, masculinity/femininity and gender identity are not causes of abuse and do not determine who is the abusive partner. Sexual and domestic violence does not occur in butch/femme relationships more frequently.

MYTH: Sexual & domestic violence occurs more frequently in relationships that engage in sadomasochistic play.

FACT: Sexual & domestic violence does not occur more frequently in relationships that engage in SM play. SM play is consensual; it is not abuse.

MYTH: White women are raped more than are Black women because Black women know how to defend themselves.

FACT: Black women are raped at a higher rate than white women. Racism and sexism work together and increase the chances of Black women being raped. Black women survive rapes by white men, in addition to rapes by Black men and other men of colour. Myths such as Black women are promiscuous, always ready for sex, and basically 'unrapeable' have led to the disbelief of Black women who are rape survivors. These ideas leave Black women more vulnerable to attack and have helped erase the history of rape and violation of Black women by white men and men of color.

MYTH: Men who rape other men are usually gay.

FACT: The idea that only gay men rape other men is a homophobic myth. Although some male rapists are gay, most male rapists (of men and women survivors) identify as heterosexual.

MYTH: White women are more inhibited about talking about sexual assault than are women of colour.

FACT: This myth is based on the racist stereotype of women of colour as being louder and more assertive than are white women. In North America, Black women are less likely to tell someone they have been sexually assaulted. Myths about Black women's sexuality play a large part in silencing them. Many women of colour fear that speaking out about sexual abuse may only cause people to think that their families and communities are more violent, and may contribute to the

ongoing racist stereotyping and criminalization of men of colour.

MYTH: Services for sexual assault survivors are accessible and meet most women's needs.

FACTS: Many women's services and medical services aimed at sexual assault or abuse survivors are completely inaccessible. Many shelters and rape crisis centres are not wheelchair accessible; some women's crisis lines are still not accessible to people with hearing dis/abilities or in languages other than English; many service providers are not trained to treat women with intellectual or mental dis/abilities or are condescending and re-victimizing towards them. Racism in women's organizations - rooted in policies and perpetuated by staff, volunteers, and clients alike - continues to bar women of colour and First Nations women from safely accessing essential services. Transgendered and transsexual women usually are barred from women's shelters or conditions are placed upon their residency, and they face transphobia from staff and other residents once they are admitted.

MYTH: The best way for survivors to get over a sexual assault is to get on with their lives and be "normal" again.

FACT: Speaking out about sexual assault might be an essential part of the recovery process for survivors. However, no survivor should ever be forced to speak, publicly or privately, before they are ready. Every survivor is the expert on their own recovery. For many, recovery becomes an ongoing process of healing, change and empowerment. All survivors have a right to support and validation from friends, family and service providers, no matter where they are in their individual healing process or how long ago the assault occurred.

MYTH: Sexual assault survivors should report their assault to the police right away.

FACT: See previous answer. Although there can be certain benefits to reporting an assault as soon as possible after it happened, survivors have the right to make their own choices about how to heal and recover. Rape crisis centres and women's centres can help them get the information they need to make well-informed choices. Many survivors have valid reasons for not wanting to go to the police: the fear of not being believed; past experiences of police brutality; fear of homophobia, transphobia, and racism from police, lawyers, and judges. If a woman has immigrated to Canada by being sponsored by the same person who has assaulted her (e.g. her partner, family member, etc.), the arrest of her sponsor could result in her deportation. Fears around reporting to police are well-rooted and valid. People supporting survivors should validate their concerns around reporting as well as offer unconditional support, whether they choose to go to the police or not.

MYTH: Queer survivors face the same challenges and risks while seeking sexual assault support as do straight survivors.

FACT: Queer survivors, whether they are "out" to most people or not, have valid fears about how being "out" to service providers may affect their treatment. They may fear not being

6 taken seriously, being subjected to homophobic remarks, or not receiving specialized treatment (e.g. for a woman who has been assaulted by another woman, being given a "routine" pregnancy test at a sexual assault care centre is totally inappropriate and marginalizing - it assumes that the perpetrator is male). They may fear their gender and sexual identity becoming public during court proceedings. If a lesbian or bisexual woman experiences activity she has never known before, such as certain types of penetration or an encounter with a male, this can be additionally traumatic - and many service providers might not be sensitive to this and other queer-specific experiences.

MYTH: If someone is assaulted but does not seek help from rape crisis centres, their situation obviously is not as serious as are the situations of people who do seek help.

FACT: Many survivors are not aware of services that can help them, or can not easily access them. Talking to someone else about being assaulted, whether it be a stranger, friend, or family member, is a HUGE and often difficult step to take. Survivors often face feelings of guilt, shame, and humiliation in order to even talk to someone else about their experience. As in reporting to the police, many survivors face racist, ableist, homophobic and transphobic barriers to talking to others, including professionals, friends, and fellow activists.

MYTH: An individual is not guilty of sexual assault unless and until they are charged and convicted with sexual assault.

FACT: The majority of sexual assaults are not reported to police. According to Statistics Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. Of the 6% of sexual assaults that are reported, only 40% result in charges being laid. Of those cases where charges are laid, two-thirds result in conviction. Only 1% of all "date/acquaintance rapes" are reported to police. Women who are sexually assaulted may not report it due to feelings of shame and humiliation or due to their fear of re-victimization through the criminal trial process, or for other reasons.

Adapted from selected materials by:

San Francisco Women Against Rape
(www.sfwar.org)

Santa Fe Rape Crisis Centre
(www.sffcc.org/same_gender.html)

Woman Abuse Prevention
(www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/sexual_assault.html)

Scarborough Hospital Sexual Assault Care Centre
(www.sacc.to)

Our Voice Rape Crisis Centre
(www.ourvoicenc.org/fact.htm)

Ontario Women's Directorate
(www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/owd/english/publications/sexual-assault/)

also their classmate, their co-worker, their friend, or a member of their family. What makes you feel unsafe may be very different from what frightens the women you know. Actions which seem harmless but may increase a woman's fear include standing too close or touching any part of her body without asking. Don't try to bully a woman into not trusting her own sense for when she is safe or in danger. There is no reason why a woman should know that you are "one of the good ones" without evidence. Find out how your behavior affects the women in your life. Once you know, it will be easier to act in ways that help them feel more secure and to avoid doing things that they find threatening.

GIVE WOMEN SPACE

Sexual assault is an ever-present threat for women. On the street, in lines, and in crowded situations, leave space between yourself and the women around you. Consider that many women aren't comfortable with a male stranger this near. If you are approaching a woman walking alone at night, try crossing to the other side of the street. The difference it makes in your life may be only a few seconds, but for her, it may be the difference between walking in comfort and walking in fear.

ENCOURAGE WOMEN'S EFFORTS TO EMPOWER THEMSELVES

Men who have never experienced what it is like to be singled out as the victim of a crime based on their gender often have difficulty understanding women's fear, and they may discount it as payanoia or man-hating. Supporting self-defense training for the women in your life-relatives, classmates, friends, and mates-is not promoting division between the sexes, but rather a more powerful, intimate relationship based on equality and mutual respect.

DEVELOP FULL RELATIONSHIPS WITH BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

Many of us grow up learning that we are supposed to find one special person of the opposite sex who will fulfill all our physical and emotional needs. This sort of conditioning drastically limits our relationships with other men and women and puts unnecessary and dangerous pressure on us and our sexual partners to be each other's "everything." In reality, there are many people with whom we can enjoy satisfying relationships when we are open to the ways in which we can share ourselves. Sexuality is only one possible aspect of such relationships. We can also share our hopes and fears, enjoy each other's special qualities and unique perspectives, take time to play, and give each other support. The more emotional connections we develop with caring male and female friends, the less pressure will fall on our sexual partners as our only emotional and physical outlet.

CONFRONT WOMEN-HATING ATTITUDES IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS

Misogyny is the often disguised yet widespread fear or hatred of women, including the attributes in ourselves which are traditionally labelled feminine. Think of the power we give to the accusation "sissy" or "fag" when our fear of not fitting in drives us to act out the most extreme macho behaviors, including rape. We all have the potential to listen, accept, and nurture.

<http://members.aardvark.net.au/~korman/rape/msr.html>

person's identity. We must accept that women mean what they say, especially when it comes to their right to control their own bodies. No one has the right to deny another person the freedom to choose if, when, or with whom to be sexual. This freedom is a constant, regardless of previous sexual relations or marital status. Even after a person has given consent, he or she still has the right to change his or her mind. Unless we are willing to accept "no" from our partner, "yes" has no meaning.

NO = NO

RECOGNIZE AND SHARE YOUR FEELINGS

All men and women experience a wide range of feelings: pride and compassion, sensitivity and competitiveness, fear and acceptance, vulnerability and hate, just to name a few. These emotions are natural reactions to events in our lives. However, we have learned to divide feelings into masculine and feminine, with little overlap. The range of feelings acceptable to men is very narrow. We pretend that men can only be aggressive and strong, logical and unemotional. In fact, we are also at times confused, nurturing, intuitive, and sad. Our adherence to traditional gender roles distorts our sense of ourselves and prevents us from seeing others as they really are. Because we have learned that our own reactions are unacceptable, we deny having them. We project them onto women and onto other men to build ourselves up at their expense. We avoid making emotional contact with men and depend entirely on women for our emotional connections. Our discomfort with our own feelings makes it harder for us to be ourselves with others, and our intolerance makes it harder for others to feel comfortable with us. On the other hand, exploring how we feel helps us decide whether we are comfortable with our own behavior and with the behavior of others. Letting others know how we feel helps us understand and sort out conflicts when they do occur, instead of running from conflict and pretending that everything is "fine." If we are willing to risk changing the ways we relate to men and women, we can begin to develop trust in our ability to relate to people as people. As we learn to be aware of our feelings and to express them honestly, we develop more confidence in ourselves and find it easier to form and maintain deeper, more rewarding relationships.

RESPECT OTHER'S FEELINGS

Have you ever tried to express yourself to someone who refused to listen to you or said you had no right to feel the way you did? Frustration and hurt are understandable responses to such emotional abuse. Being discounted like this also makes it harder than it already is to share feelings. In the extreme, our disregard for others' feelings is at the heart of rape. On the other hand, if we treat others the way we would like to be treated, they will be more likely to communicate with us honestly and directly. It is not necessary to agree with or even fully understand what someone says in order to respect their feelings and real and true.

ASK WOMEN WHAT MAKES THEM FEEL UNSAFE

Over 80% of rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. Women have cause to fear not only the stranger in the bushes, but

<http://members.aardvark.net.au/~korman/rape/msr.html>

9/2/2004

Sexual Assault and Abuse within LGBTQ Communities why it can be so hard to talk about

• Most sexual assaults and abuse occur within relationships.

Sexual assault and abuse within relationships can be really difficult to talk about for lots of reasons. Sometimes we don't want to "out" someone we care about as being abusive. Sometimes when we do speak out, people don't believe us ("but they're so nice!" etc) or are told that the abuse was our fault, especially if something happened before and we didn't break up with them immediately. Because our communities tend to be small and often people know each other's business, it can be really hard to tell other LGBTQ people about abuse we're experiencing from our partners. Additionally, coming out about abuse can create conflict in a community, and often people end up "choosing sides," which can be a terrifying idea especially in small social scenes where the abuser is well-known and well-liked. However, the truth is that most people who are abusive have a pattern of abuse (they are abusive to most of their partners in some way), so coming out about it is a way to get help ourselves, protect others in the community, and encourage the abusive person to get help.

• Outing the abuser might "fulfill stereotypes" about LGBTQ communities.

Ever hear someone say that an individual is LGBTQ because they were sexually assaulted? Ever hear someone say that gay men are sexual predators? How about trans women? There are a lot of stereotypes out there about sexual assault within our communities, and sometimes these stereotypes might discourage us from speaking out about abuse. Sometimes it can feel like we are "betraying" the community when we seek help as LGBTQ survivors of LGBTQ violence. However, our communities are stronger when we tell the truth—keeping our dirty laundry to ourselves makes for a dirty closet!

• People who've experienced abuse might be afraid to "bust stereotypes" about LGBTQ communities.

Ever hear someone say that sexual assault doesn't happen between women? The reality is that sexual assault happens in all communities—regardless of race, income, gender, sexuality, political orientation, religion, etc—and people of all genders can be perpetrators of sexual assault! We need to work within all of our communities to make sure that survivors are believed, that survivors can find the support and justice that they need and deserve, that perpetrators get appropriate help to change, and that rape and abuse go extinct!

• Homophobia, transphobia, & sexism make it hard to talk about sex at all.

Lots of times it can be hard to talk about sex with partners or potential partners because talking about sex is hard in general. Many of us may not have gotten any relevant sex education, and we don't live in a society where open discussions about sex are encouraged. So how do we tell someone what we want to do to them, where we want to be touched and how, what parts of our bodies to avoid, what to call our parts? How do we ask what's ok, how do we negotiate safe sex? Sometimes getting drunk or high seems to make it easier, but that can also make it hard to know when we've crossed a boundary for ourselves or for someone else. Getting comfortable asking for what we need, and learning how to check in with partners is a revolutionary act.

• Mainstream support services might not be safe places for LGBTQ survivors to go to for help.

For many of us, calling the police is not a safe or desirable option. Also, medical service providers, counselors, and other social service providers regularly deny LGBTQ people services, and often disrespect us in various ways. The fact that many of us don't go "outside the community" for help makes for a vicious cycle—providers don't see as a group they need to serve and so they have no services for us, so we don't go there, so they don't see it as a need to have those services, etc. Whether or not LGBTQ people decide to use these services, it's important that we figure out ways within our communities to deal with sexual assault and relationship abuse, as well as challenge mainstream services to serve us with competence and respect.

¹ In the 2004 report of the FORGE Transgender Sexual Violence Project, 31% of trans-identified and SOFFA respondents had been sexually assaulted by a female, 16% by a transgender individual, and 52% by a male. FORGE. *Transgender Sexual Violence Project* (online: www.forge-forward.org/SVF, 1994) 9.

• Sexist and transphobic ideas about gender can make conversations about sexual assault difficult for many of us.

Ever hear someone say that men can't be sexually assaulted, or that women are not batterers? Ever hear someone say that a trans man would not be trans if they could just "get past" an experience of sexual assault? Ever hear someone say that femmequeens are always bottoms, and that bottoms are never perpetrators of sexual assault? It can be especially hard to come out about being a survivor if we have ideas that masculine people are never victimized, or that feminine people never victimize. Ending abuse within our communities requires challenging these types of ideas about the relationship between gender and sexual assault.

• A culture of sexual coercion sometimes exists within LGBT communities (as well as within mainstream communities).

Many LGBT stories, movies and tv shows feature people having their first sexual experience with someone who's much older, much more experienced, and much more sober. While this isn't always coercive, there is a way that these images can sometimes turn what's actually a pretty serious and nonconsensual imbalance of power into something that seems sexy, even though someone is getting pressured into doing something they aren't sure they want to do. In many of our communities there is a lot of pressure to want and have a lot of different kind of sex with a lot of different people, which is great if that's what you want, but can lead to people feeling like they have to be that kind of sexual person in order to be a "real" member of the community.

• Relationships that play consensually with power can also have abuse in them.

Sexual coercion is not the same as BDSM (bondage & discipline, sado-masochism, also know as "leather" or "kink"), as BDSM usually involves carefully getting clear consent and negotiating safe words (a word someone says which means stop). Sometimes abuse does happen within BDSM scenes/relationships/etc, and it can be especially hard to talk about that. But the bottom line is that any sexual act—kinky or vanilla—should be something everyone's saying yes to.

so what can we do?

- **Make sure to get consent for any sexual act!**
- **Believe someone if they tell you they are being hurt by a partner.**
- **Challenge mainstream service providers to address the needs of LGBT communities around assault and abuse.**
- **Support survivors in getting the healing and justice they need and deserve.**
- **Support perpetrators in getting the help they need to change.**
- **Talk about sexual assault and abuse in our communities---**
Break the silence, end the shame!

to get help for yourself or a friend

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE
- Women Against Abuse 24-Hour Emergency Hotline: 215-386-7777
- Center for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Legal Hotline: 1-866-LGBTLAW
- Menery: 215-242-2235

Anyone can use any these resources, regardless of how they identify.

WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO TO HELP STOP RAPE: Information for Men from: Men Stopping Rape, Inc. (MSR) - 306 N. Brooks St., Madison, WI USA 53715 - (608) 257-4444

TALK ABOUT SEX

Many of us grow up with unrealistic beliefs about sex; that we should instinctively know what to do; that we should be ready to achieve an erection instantly and maintain it for hours; and that it is unmasculine to have to talk about what gives us (or our partner) pleasure. These beliefs and others keep us from knowing our own sexuality and from enjoying our sexual relationships. Sex without discussion does not allow consent, or even minimal expectations, to be communicated. Without mutual consent, sex becomes rape. Sex is healthy when it reflects the free and mutual sharing of one another. When we discuss what makes us comfortable and uncomfortable and try new ways to express ourselves, we also greatly reduce the risk of sexual assault.

DISCUSS YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Expectations are hopes crystallized by silence. Acting on our expectations without sufficient information can cause serious misunderstandings and lead to rape. There is nothing wrong with feeling sexual desire, but all too often, we do not communicate our desires, find out our partner's feelings, or establish consent. Instead, we project our interest in sex onto our partner: we assume she or he feels as we do, and we misinterpret any friendliness as invitation. Establishing consent for sexual (or physical) contact at one point does not reduce the need to re-establish consent later. A person's consent to come to your apartment, to kiss you, or to touch you is not the same as consent to any other sexual acts. Neither do so-called nonverbal cues such as someone's winking at you, drinking with you, or starting to undress you imply consent for sexual intercourse. Even if we think our partner is sending us "mixed messages," it is up to us to get clarification. Acting on our assumptions may seem more spontaneous but often leads us to be dishonest, manipulative, or to use physical force to get what we want.

Most of us have grown up with the bias that talking about sex is "just not done." But without communication, gender stereotypes are our only guide to behavior: men are encouraged to push for as much sex as possible. Women are forced to take all responsibility for deciding where to stop. This double standard is unfair and destructive to all of us. Discussing sexual expectations, especially in new relationships, is the best way of confirming mutual agreement, and the only way that we as men can take responsibility for the consequences of our sexual behavior. Share your hopes, feelings, fears, and fantasies with friends, dates and lovers. Such sharing creates possibilities for freer, more honest, more mutually satisfying relationships.

LISTEN TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER

We have been taught that it is a routine part of seduction to ignore a woman's saying "no" and to assume she means "maybe" or even "yes." But without clearly established consent, what we call seduction is actually rape. Decisions and wishes about sexuality must be respected because they are critical to a

<http://members.aardvark.net.au/~korman/rape/msr.html>