What is Date Rape?

Date Rape is...

- As traumatic and serious as other forms of rape
- Not a victim/survivor’s fault
- Against the law
- Against the Cabrillo Student Code of Conduct and the Cabrillo College Policy

Date rape is recognized as a serious concern among college-age students. Sexual aggression in dating situations does happen. This section is designed to increase your understanding of date rape and help you protect yourself. Whether you or someone you know is the survivor of date rape, here are some things you should know:

- Date rape is forcible sexual activity against a person’s will by someone they know.
- Women are not the only recipients of sexual violence. While the majority of victims are women, men are also sexually assaulted.
- Although date rapists are usually men, sexual assault does occur in both lesbian and gay male relationships. Same-sex victimization is just as traumatic and may be even more so because of the potentially homophobic responses of those the survivor turns to for help.
- A majority of incidents involve college-aged women.
- Sexual coercion and aggression can occur at any stage in a relationship.
- While rape by a stranger tends to occur at any time and in a variety of settings, rape by a date tends to occur on weekends on the rapist’s turf (e.g., residence hall room, apartment, car, etc.)
- The date rapist tends to use verbal and/or physical force to overpower his/her date or partner.
- The survivor of date rape may feel guilty, ashamed or confused. She/he may mistakenly believe that it was her/his fault or that she/he could have avoided the attack. After an attack, the survivor’s sense of trust in her/his own judgment and in others may be diminished.
- The survivor may be afraid of having to face the rapist again in class, the residence hall or on campus. She/he may be anxious about others finding out and this may interfere with her/his ability to seek the help and support she/he needs.
• Consent is essential. In some cases, neither the survivor nor the perpetrator of date rape understand that what happened was illegal or is considered sexual assault. Either or both may just have an undefined “bad feeling” about the experience. It is important for everyone to set their limits, figure out the level of sexual activity they are comfortable with (including no sexual activity), express that to their partner, AND listen to their partner and respect her/his limits as well.

**It's Important to Remember ...**

**In heterosexual dating relationships**

*For women:*

Women are taught/conditioned to be passive, submissive and indirect. This behavior can lead to misunderstandings between men and women and lead to sexual aggression. This does not mean, however, that women are to blame for date rape, simply that our culture socializes women in such a way that both talking about sex and knowing and setting their boundaries can often be difficult.

• It is important to stay in touch with your feelings and values. You have a right to be unsure of your feelings; however, be aware that your uncertainty may make it difficult to communicate clearly to your date. Act on your own comfort level. It’s okay to say you need more time or that you don’t want to have sex.
• Believe in your right to express your feelings and learn how to do so assertively.
• Know that you have a right to set sexual limits and nobody has a right to force you to do something you don’t want to do.
• Be aware of attitudes you hold that may prevent you from self-expressions, such as “nice girls don’t get angry,” or “nice girls protect other’s feelings.”
• Be aware of specific situations in which you do not feel relaxed or in control. Trust your gut-level feelings.
• Remember that women can coerce men into having sex too, and be careful that you do not put a partner in the position of feeling that they have to have sex. Respect your partner’s boundaries too!
• If you have been sexually assaulted, it is important that you talk with someone who can support you in your recovery. There are many resources both on-campus and off-campus to help you.
For men:

If you are unsure about what a woman wants, ask her. Communicating about mutual expectations and unclear messages is an effective way of eliminating confusion.

- Men are often pressured to be aggressive, forceful and to “score.” This can be counterproductive in personal interactions with others and can lead to sexual aggression.
- It is NEVER okay to force yourself on a woman, even if you think she’s been teasing you or leading you on, even if you have heard a rumor that women say “no” but mean “yes,” and even if you think your friends expect you to “score.”
- Be aware of attitudes you hold that may foster aggression in relationships, such as:
  - “I’m less of a man if I don’t score.”
  - “What will my friends think if I don’t score?”
  - “Women expect men to take the sexual lead.”
  - “Her lips say ‘no,’ but her eyes say ‘yes.’”
  - “Men who are sensitive are wimps.”
  - “She wouldn’t have come up to my room if she didn’t want to have sex.”
  - “I bought her an expensive dinner, she owes me.”
- Whenever you use force to have sex, or have sex with someone who isn’t able to consent (e.g. someone who’s drunk or asleep), you are committing a crime called rape, even if you know the woman or have had sex with her before. Not only could you face criminal charges, but your academic career could also be at risk because sexual assault is against the Cabrillo Student Code of Conduct.
- Remember that women are not the only survivors of date rape. Although it is uncommon for a woman to sexually assault a man, it does happen. You also have the right to say “no,” and to set limits regarding sexual experience. If you have been sexually assaulted, it is important that you talk to someone who can support you in recovering from this traumatic experience. Men who have been raped, either by a date or a stranger, often feel too ashamed to tell anyone, but there are people and services available that can help you to cope.
In same-sex dating relationships

There is a myth that sexual assault doesn’t occur in gay and lesbian relationships, but it is just that, a myth. Women are sometimes raped or sexually assaulted by their female partners or dates, and men can be assaulted by their male partners or dates. (There are also a number of issues concerning rape as a hate crime, which are covered in the general section on Sexual Assault.) Survivors of same-sex date rape have to deal with the same issues as survivors of opposite-sex date rape, with the addition of concerns about homophobic responses from others and beliefs that same-sex partners cannot sexually assault each other. LGBT survivors of sexual assault may also fear exposing their community to negative reactions and stereotypes and not tell anyone about the rape for that reason. These additional issues make it all the more important for LGBT survivors to find support in helping them to recover and cope with the trauma of having been sexually assaulted.

For women:

The belief that rape cannot occur between same-sex partners is especially strong for women, as many people believe that rape must involve penetration. This is not true. Rape and sexual assault can occur between two women and can involve forced sexual touching, oral sex, or penetration with a finger or some other object. There is also a myth that rape by another woman is somehow less traumatic or damaging than rape by a man, or is not “real” rape, because the perpetrator and survivor may be closer in size. Neither of these myths is true. Sexual assault by a partner is often MORE traumatic than assault by a stranger, because of the levels of trust, attraction, and love involved. Women in same-sex relationships may also feel that they should be able to trust another woman and then feel doubly violated.

Just as with women in opposite sex relationships, it is important for partners to be aware of their boundaries. Know what behaviors you do and do not want to engage in, and communicate this to your partner. Be assertive when someone is crossing your boundaries and tell them to stop if they are doing something you don’t like or don’t want to happen. It’s also important to listen to your partner’s boundaries and not to push her beyond what she is willing or ready to do.

If you are a survivor of same-sex sexual assault, it is important to find someone to talk to who is aware and understanding of the specific issues faced by LGBT survivors. There are many resources on campus
and within the community that include counselors specifically trained on issues within the LGBT communities.

For men:

Men in same-sex relationships also face a number of myths and expectations. For many years there was a myth that a man could not rape another man, though increasingly, people understand that this is not the case. There is also a myth that men always want sex and are willing to engage in it whenever and wherever - making it especially hard for men to say “no.” But as with any other type of relationship, you have the right to decide for yourself what you are and are not willing to do and to have those decisions respected. It is essential for partners to communicate their boundaries and respect them.

Men in same-sex relationships often face the most stigma and prejudice when they try to seek help after having been raped or sexually assaulted by a partner. Attitudes that gay men are promiscuous or that rape is something that only happens to women can get in the way of service providers offering safe and comfortable places for male survivors of rape to talk about their experiences and receive health care. It is therefore essential that male survivors of sexual assault find safe spaces to seek help. Luckily, there are a number of resources on campus and in the community that have specific training to help male survivors of rape and sexual assault.

What Can I Do?

If you are, or think you might be, a survivor of date rape, it is important that you find someone to talk to. Date rape can be just as traumatic, and sometimes more so, than stranger rape - just because your attacker was someone you knew doesn’t mean it wasn’t rape. Sometimes survivors of date rape are not sure that what happened to them was sexual assault; they might think of it as just “bad sex” and think they are overreacting. Remember, no one has the right to make you do something you don’t want to do - date rape is NOT your fault.