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Handout: You Too Can Help...

Women's Rape Crisis Center

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The rape victim loses her sense of dignity and the feeling of control over her own life. Helping the woman regain a strong sense of herself is the most important overall aim of your helping relationship.

The intensity of her reactions will depend on how much she had thought about rape before the attack. It makes a difference whether she thought rape only happened to "bad" women, or whether she knew that rape is an act of hostility that can be directed at any woman and at any time. If the rape was her first introduction to sex, or if it was extremely violent, she will probably be terrified.

Chances are that when you first talk with her she will be in a state of shock or numb disbelief. If she is very upset and crying, look upon it as a healthy sign. She is in touch with her feelings and is releasing them. Remember that she may still be very frightened. Your giving lots of comfort and reassurance that she is safe will help her to trust you.

She may feel dirtied and despoiled. You can help her accept that it is okay to have such feelings and to face them. Anger at her assailant is usually the underlying feeling. Help her get in touch with the anger so she won't turn it inward and withdraw into shock.

Before she decides to clean up, you can help her with the decision of whether to call the police, the Women's Crisis Center, and other kinds of help. If she desires, accompany her to help deal with practical matters of medical aid and law enforcement.

The woman may want to talk about the rape. Listen, encourage her to talk, and if she agrees, take notes. This will help her remember valuable details later if she wishes to go to court. Do not try to put the rape out of her mind--she may conclude that you are too ashamed of her to listen. You must come to terms with your own feelings about rape. The victim will be very sensitive; any coldness or "differentness" in your attitude will feel negative to her and will feed any negative feelings she already has about herself. Your sincere warmth and openness will be most helpful to her at this time.

After several days, when the initial shock dwindles, the rape victim may want to fall back into her old routine. She may attempt to suppress the entire experience, and deny the emotions she feels toward herself and the rapist. Unless the woman really wants to talk, it is very difficult for a friend to intervene at this point. The most you can do is to be supportive and be available to talk.

The end of this "pseudo-adjustment" is usually precipitated by some event which reminds the woman of the rape. She may be depressed and find she cannot stop thinking about it. Or she may have some strange and frightening dreams. Somehow things just don't seem to be going well in her life, or she finds she can't trust people or develop good relationships with men.

You can help your friend by getting her to talk about her feelings about herself and about the rapist. Act as a sounding board so she can hear herself and be more aware of what she is actually saying to herself. One way you can do this is to simply repeat back to her in your own words the feelings she tries to express. "It sounds like you feel..." or "You're saying you feel..." are good phrases to start with.

At the bottom of these feelings is often a great deal of anger--perhaps more than she wants to handle. But the full expression of intense anger can be very healthy--and it can become a very constructive force in her future life. As your friend re-integrates herself, that anger can provide energy for learning how to defend herself, finding safer clothes to wear, asserting her strengths more in close relationships, and many other positive kinds of personal growth.

1. W.R.C.C. is not funded by any agency. We need donations to exist.
2. Staff: does not have to be just phone volunteers. Phone volunteers will have two training sessions. Also need staff for public relations, fundraising, proposal writing, speakers' bureau, childcare, research, legislative action, typing, telephoning, courtwatching, distributing stickers.

Times-Union/Journal, 6/9/1974:

"The psychiatrist said Glenn..developed a hostile relationship with women and his sex crimes were not to satisfy his own sexual appetite, but to humiliate his female victims. 'He would do this for the excitement of perpetrating an atrocity and showing his hatred toward women.' -- from article on Glenn Carlson, southside rapist.

"Tried living up to male image--need for conquests, superiority, feeling of power. I used sex as a weapon."

"Rape does not depend on your clothes--mini skirts whatever--you're an object: all are the same. No difference, availability all important."

"Never the victim's fault. Best defense is to play it cool. Talk to the PERSON. Bring him out of the fantasy. Don't fight--his adrenelin is really up--doesn't know his own strength. Talk him down. You have as much times as with a boyfriend. He's irrational --more irrational behavior my trigger him. BUT TURN HIM IN. Sex offenders are loners. Full of guilt. Feel they're sick. Won't talk to anyone about it."

"Hostility toward self. Not living up to traditional role of husband and father. Power....why didn't E.R.A. pass? Male fear. (It) almost buried all of us."

--three convicted rapists, SexOffender Rehabilitation Program, South Florida State Hospital (At a seminar for Legislature on Rape, Tallahassee 4/20/1974
ONLY TREATMENT CENTER IN FLORIDA, run by Dr. Geraldine Boozer

ANALOGY #1: People do stupid things like leave their keys in their car, or forget to cancel their newspaper subscription while they're on vacation: If their car is stolen, or their house burglarized, that does not excuse the thief from prosecution or conviction. Then why does a woman doing something on that level (not locking her car, opening her door without first checking who it is) get accused of "wanting to be raped"? Did they others want to be burglarized?

- #2. Mini-skirted, sexy women get raped because their looks make a man loose control. So they are to blame because they are seductive. Jewelry stores put their best wares in the windows to attract buyers. Because they do so does not mean that they want someone to ~~xxxx~~ break in the window and steal.
- #3. A man runs out of cigarettes and walks the few blocks to a store, at night, to buy some. He is mugged. People click their tongue and mutter about the high crime rate "You can't even go out!" Tsk, tsk. More police are needed. All these criminals. A woman runs out of cigarettes, at night, and goes to the store. She is raped. "My God, what did she expect?" "It's her own fault -- what is a woman doing out by herself at night? Does she want to get raped?"

WRCC 48% calls on information; 39% calls by rape victims, after rape
46% of the rape victims knew the rapist; 70% reported the rape

GROUP SPEAKING

1. Prepare a 10 -15 minute presentation, then open up for questions. Suggest:

A. Definition of RAPE ~~XXXX~~:

- of course physical assault, but also economic coercion, blackmail.
See new law effective Oct. '74/ also Report of the Task Force on Rape, Sept. '73 Dis. of Columbia City Council

B. DEFINITION OF WRCC

- L. To provide a support system for the rape victims, i.e. advocate program, alternative shelter, follow-up, victim groups.
- 2. To work with the community in studying the causes of rape -- with a long range goal of setting up preventive and treatment centers and services for sex offenders.
- 3. To educate the general public to the nature of crimes of sexual assault and to strive to create an environment in which women may live their lives free from the threat of sexual assault.

C. LEGAL PROCEDURES:

- 1. After a woman reports a rape, an uniformed officer will come to the scene. He decides if a rape has occurred and his questions should mainly be for information on the suspect..
- 2. She is then taken to University Hospital. She may go there with the police, or be taken by family/friends. Here they will get evidence for the courts and take care of her medical needs. The doctor may only question her on her injuries.
- 3. A detective from homicide will meet her there and after the examination, she goes to the courthouse to talk to a detective.
- 4. She may be questioned 4 or 5 times, by different people. Even when the police are being very sensitive, this can be an ordeal for the woman. They need a supportive friend, or can call WRCC.
- 5. After suspect has been arrested and identified, the rape victim x is questioned by the state's attorney's office: she is a witness for the State.
- 6. Time lapse from report of a rape to court (maybe arrest) is from 60 - 90 days.

RAPE STATISTICS: Reported Rapes: 1970 : 191 1971 : 194 1972 : 236

1973 : 275 From 1970 - 1973 ... 83 more rep. rapes 43% increase

1974 (thru May): 125 reported rapes (compared to 107 in 1973)

38 (30%) arrested; 27 (21%) unfounded

"Unfounded" in Jax. includes a woman saying "forget it" while she's being questioned. This also includes those reported rapes where the police never believe the woman to begin with..they are not convinced she has been raped.

Other places, notably New York, Lt. Julia Tucker, commander of NY police New police Dept. Sex Offenses and Rape Analysis Squad since its inception, in 1972, ... has found that the % of rape complaints determined by the police to be unfounded is 2%, much the same as the unfounded rate for all felony complaints.

D. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- 1. Take the Stop Rape pamphlets to give out to all members: hold up and go over main areas.
- 2. Stress that this is only a SHORT-TERM method of trying to avoid rape. Rape is still possible. Rape has occurred in Jax. at busy shopping centers, at places of employment, in the daytime.
- 3. The only way to stop rape is to deal with WHY men rape and to find longterm solutions to the problem of men raping.

E. DONATIONS AND STAFF

- 1. Possibility of P.O.? BOX