

What Do I Do Now?



a survival guide for victims of acquaintance rape

What is acquaintance rape?

Acquaintance rape is when somebody you know—a boyfriend or girlfriend, a friend, a classmate, or even someone you just met—uses coercion (including drugs or alcohol), violence, or threats to force unwanted oral, vaginal, or anal sex. When this happens in a dating relationship, it is commonly known as *date rape*.

Should I call 911?

Yes. **Rape is a serious crime and you should report it.** Do not worry about getting into trouble if you were partying, drinking, taking drugs, or violating curfew. The police are concerned with your health and your safety. And remember, calling the police and filing a report does not mean that you have to press charges.

Do I need a medical exam?

Yes. Call someone you trust—an adult or friend—and ask him or her to take you to the hospital. **Do not shower, eat or drink anything, brush your teeth, go to the bathroom, or change your clothes before you go.** The medical team and law enforcement need to find out whether you are hurt and need to collect evidence from your clothing and your body during the medical exam. You may also receive emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy. While the medical exam may be uncomfortable and embarrassing, it will not be painful.

Did you know?
28% of rape victims are assaulted by their boyfriends and 35% are sexually assaulted by relatives.¹

Should I see a counselor?

Yes. You may find it difficult to cope with what has happened to you. A counselor can help you work through your feelings and take steps toward healing. With help and support—and your own strength and resilience—you can get through this and move on with your life.

You can start by talking to your school counselor or school nurse. They can refer you to a counselor in your community who specializes in working with teens who have been raped. You can also [contact the National Sexual Assault Hotline](http://www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-online-hotline) operated by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) at 1-800-656-HOPE or <http://www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-online-hotline>. They can direct you to a rape crisis center in your community. (You can find additional online resources in **Table 1.**)

The important thing is to talk to somebody about what happened. The traumatic experience of rape does not have to ruin your life.

Fast Fact
Although young people are reluctant to speak out about dating violence, those who do often find talking helpful.²

table 1: getting help

<p>911Rape http://www.911rape.org/home</p>	<p>Sponsored by the Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center, this site offers support for sexual assault victims as well as a safe, anonymous way to learn how to get help after a sexual assault.</p>
<p>After Silence http://www.aftersilence.org/index.php</p>	<p>On this website, you will find a support group, message board, and chat room for survivors of rape, sexual assault, and sexual abuse.</p>
<p>National Center for Victims of Crime, Teen Action Partnership http://www.ncvc.org/tvp/main.aspx?dbID=DBTeenActionPartnership788</p>	<p>Toll free helpline—1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255, 8AM to 8PM EST), offers supportive counseling, practical information, and referrals to local community resources and victim’s advocates.</p>
<p>Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) http://www.rainn.org/</p>	<p>In addition to the toll free hotline mentioned above on this factsheet, RAINN offers general information on sexual assault, tips for what do following an attack, information on how to help loved ones who have been raped, and a search page for finding local rape crisis centers.</p>



With help and support—and your own strength and resilience—you can get through this and move on with your life.

Fast Fact
38% of acquaintance rape victims are 14-17 years old.³

Common Reactions to Acquaintance Rape

The experience of being raped by someone you thought you could trust can bring up a wide range of complicated emotions, including guilt, self-doubt, and worries that the rape was somehow your fault. Working through these feelings is an important part of the healing process, and will help you move on with your life.

In **Table 2**, you will find some common concerns and some misconceptions about acquaintance rape, and common sense answers you can focus on to deal with some of these mistaken beliefs.

table 2: making sense of your reactions

After a sexual assault you may . . .	The truth is . . .
<i>Blame yourself (for example, wonder if you were flirting too much or wearing clothes that were too sexy).</i>	It's not your fault, no matter how you acted or what you wore.
<i>Worry that it's your fault for accepting a drink that was drugged.</i>	It's not your fault. You didn't know the drink was drugged.
<i>Worry that you will get in trouble with the police if you were drinking because you are a minor.</i>	The police are more concerned with your health and safety.
<i>Feel ashamed, angry, sad, different, lonely, anxious, betrayed, depressed, or as if you will never be able to trust anyone again.</i>	All of these feelings are normal and the bad feelings will not last forever. Talking to a counselor can help you work through all of these feelings.
<i>Feel guilty or confused because you know your attacker.</i>	Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knew. It wasn't your fault and you could not predict this.
<i>Have nightmares about the assault or have your mind filled with images of the assault even when you are trying not to think about it.</i>	This is normal, too and will not last forever. Counseling can help you learn to deal with these images.
<i>Worry about how your friends will react if they find out (Will they believe you or take sides?).</i>	Your real friends will be supportive and will not take sides. Besides, your well-being is more important than what other people think.
<i>Worry about how your family will react if they find out.</i>	This might be hard for them to accept at first, but your family loves you and will be supportive. Again, counseling can help your family as well as you.
<i>Think that nobody understands how you feel and you are all alone.</i>	A lot of teens have gone through this and you have the support of people who care about you.

References

1. Bohmer, C. & Parrot, A. (1993). *Sexual assault on campus: The problem and the solution*. New York: Lexington Books.
2. Jackson, S.M., Cram, F., & Seymour, F.W. (2000). Violence and sexual coercion in high school students' dating relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 15, 23-36.
3. Warshaw, R. (1988). *I never called it rape: The Ms. report on recognizing, fighting, and surviving date and acquaintance rape*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

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National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Sexual Abuse Committee. (2009). *Caring for Kids: What Parents Need to Know about Sexual Abuse*. Los Angeles, CA & Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress.