



ACQUAINTANCE SEXUAL ASSAULT

It can happen to you or someone you know.
Know the facts.
It happens at UBC.

By Marlane Press

First-year university students Sarah and Mark* noticed each other in the cafeteria but hadn't spoken until they were introduced by a group of friends several weeks later. Over a couple of freely-flowing pitchers of beer during the third week of classes at the pub, Sarah and Mark strike up a conversation. By midnight, Sarah feels sick and decides it's time to head home. Mark tells her she shouldn't walk alone and that he'll accompany her to her room, just to be on the safe side. Flattered by the attention, Sarah accepts—receives thumbs up from a group of new girlfriends—and stumbles back to residence with Mark.

Once home, Mark takes Sarah into her room and helps her climb into bed. The room is spinning, Sarah says, and Mark brings a glass of water. Then he climbs into bed with her. Before Sarah says anything, Mark tells her he's exhausted and just wants to take a nap before heading home. Sarah continues her silence: she isn't really sure she wants him to leave anyway.

As she starts to drift into sleep, Sarah feels Mark's hands under her clothes. She tenses up. Mark offers a back massage and tells her to relax. Though she feels uncomfortable by his advances, Sarah doesn't verbally protest. When Mark starts touching more than just her back, Sarah pretends to be asleep in the hopes that he'll stop touching her and either fall asleep or leave her room. This doesn't happen.

When he climbs on top of her, Sarah rolls over and tells him to stop because she feels ill. Again, Mark tells her to relax, he's going to make her feel much better. She tries pushing him off, but she's dizzy and the room is still spinning. Sarah also fears that if she doesn't let him do what he wants, he'll embarrass her in front of his friends. Or maybe he'll physically hurt her. She pronounces one final time that she wants him to stop, but he simply smiles and tells her that she really doesn't want him to stop. Mark then has sex with Sarah.

When she wakes in the morning, semi-clothed, Sarah remembers what happened. Overcome with shame and embarrassment, she tells Mark to leave immediately. He's confused but doesn't argue. Later that day, Sarah's floormates tell her how happy they are for her: they've heard that Mark spent the night. She tries to be as excited as her friends are, but can't help feeling like she's going to be sick. (*Names have been changed.)

What exactly constitutes acquaintance sexual assault?

Originating as a casual, platonic, dating, academic or familial relationship, acquaintance sexual assault is any form of unwanted sexual contact. It can include kissing, touching, grabbing, and forced sexual intercourse. Acquaintance sexual assault does not necessarily result in physical injury and is NEVER the victim's fault.

In British Columbia, 89% of sexual assault victims knew their attackers. (Violence Against Women Survey; Statistics Canada, 1993.) Sexual assault by an acquaintance is as traumatic as sexual assault by a stranger.

Why Report Acquaintance Sexual Assault?

Acquaintance sexual assault is a traumatic experience that may leave you feeling as though you have lost control in your life. Many victims are in a state of shock and find it hard to believe this really happened to them. They may feel embarrassed, ashamed, guilty, responsible, powerless, depressed, or angry. (Or all of the above.) These are all common reactions.

By reporting the incident immediately to the police and health care professionals, you will be provided crucial medical, emotional and legal support — if you want it. It gives you the choice of later taking legal action, or healing in private. Reporting can help establish a case against your attacker and help prevent this from happening again.

And you don't have to report it by yourself. Take along a friend, a family member, a counsellor, or a crisis centre volunteer.

NO MEANS NO

CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

Fact Sheet compiled by the Vancouver Police Department

A recent study involving date/acquaintance rape and students found that college and university students have every reason to be concerned about sexual assault. Acquaintance sexual assault occurs more frequently among university-aged students than any other group. (Alcohol and other drugs and misinterpreted signals contribute to many of the assaults on campus.)

A national survey on the victimization of women on university and college campuses found that:

- 20.2% of female students said they gave into unwanted sexual intercourse because they were overwhelmed by a man's continued arguments and pressure;
- 6.6% of female students said they had unwanted sexual intercourse because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force;
- 13.6% of female students said that, when they were drunk or high, a man attempted unwanted sexual intercourse.

Help prevent acquaintance sexual assault

Statistics can be frightening, but they should not deter you from meeting people and enjoying new relationships. Here are a few guidelines to help prevent acquaintance sexual.

Respect

Respect yourself, others, your relationships.

Communicate openly.

Be clear about your sexual desires and limits. Know what is acceptable to you. Men and women often have different definitions of love and sex, and your expectations may differ from another's. State your feelings to your partner clearly and early.

Be honest and assertive about your limits.

Passivity and gentle hints are usually interpreted as permission to continue. "Polite" behaviour works only if everyone observes the same rules. If you do not want to be touched, say "no" firmly, directly, and repeatedly, if required. Be prepared to leave.

Establish your rights over your own body.

Sex is not a game of barter. You have the right to decide when to stop, regardless of previous sexual behaviour or any money that may have been spent on you.

Only "yes" means yes.

It is never okay to coerce or force someone to have sex.

Being turned down for sex is not a personal rejection.

Your partner may be unwilling to have sex for a variety of reasons that have little or nothing to do with you. Respect your partner's limits.

Take responsibility for your own body and behaviour.

You may feel that your desires are beyond your control, but your actions are always the result of your own decisions.

Be aware of your surroundings.

If you're feeling uncomfortable or in danger, trust your intuition and act on it.

Be conscious of your non-verbal message.

Sometimes your behaviour or appearance may be misinterpreted as a sexual invitation. While it's no excuse for unwanted attention, be aware that the possibility of misunderstanding exists. Match your actions with your intentions.

Be aware of misperceptions.

Flirting or sexy dressing are not sexual invitations. If you encounter mixed messages from a partner, talk about it ("I'm not sure what you want..."). Listen to the answer.

Realize that previous sex does not imply continued permission.

Like any association or friendship, a sexual relationship evolves. Everyone has a right to change his or her mind.

Know that alcohol and drugs are often related to acquaintance sexual assault.

Drugs and use of alcohol hamper your ability to think and communicate clearly, which often compromises your ability to make responsible decisions. Take steps to ensure your own safety. Being drunk is no excuse for sexual assault. Having sex with someone too intoxicated to consent *is* sexual assault.

What if someone confides in you?

Listen and remain calm. Encourage discussion about the assault to the extent that the victim feels comfortable. Reassure the victim that he or she is not responsible for the assault — no matter what — and that no one asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted. Above all, avoid judging or questioning him or her.

Seek medical assistance and/or counselling as soon as possible.

Encourage the victim not to wash or change clothes. (Washing and changing clothes can destroy evidence.) Help your friend explore options and choices toward the process of healing, but avoid making the decisions. Encourage him or her to seek counselling from specially trained health professionals.

Report the acquaintance sexual assault.

Discuss the benefits of reporting the assault and offer to accompany the victim. If she or he is reluctant to report it, ask if you can file an anonymous report. Respect the need for privacy and the desire to talk or not talk about the details of the assault.

Acknowledge your own feeling of anger, concern, and sadness.

Seek counselling for yourself to help process your reaction to the assault. Remind the victim that your love and friendship for her or him remains intact.

Avoid saying that you know how the survivor feels.

No one can ever really know how another person feels even if they have experienced the same kind of trauma.

RESOURCES

AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre SASC, 604-822-9090, email sasc@ams.ubc.ca

WAVAW/Rape Crisis Centre, 24-hour crisis line, 604-255-6344

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, 24-hour crisis line, 604-872-8212

Counselling Services, 604-822-3811
Brock Hall, 1874 East Mall

Student Health Service, 604-822-7011
Room M334 Acute Care Unit,
2211 Wesbrook Mall, UBC

Speakeasy Student Support, 604-822-3777
Main Concourse, SUB

FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Emergency DIAL 911

Non-Emergency

UBC Student Health Service, 604-822-7011
Room M334, Acute Care Unit,
2211 Wesbrook Mall, UBC

School of Medicine Family Practice Teaching Unit, 604-822-5431, 3rd floor,
5950 University Blvd, UBC

FOR PROCEDURAL ASSISTANCE

Emergency DIAL 911

University RCMP, non-emergency
604-224-1322, 2990 Wesbrook Mall, UBC

Vancouver Police Department,
non-emergency 604-717-3321,
312 Main Street, Vancouver

UBC Equity Office 604-822-6353
email equity@equity.ubc.ca