

Myths

Rape is perpetrated by strangers and involves violence

TRUTH – It is more common for someone to be raped by someone they know and while violence can be used, coercion, threat, misuse of power or use of alcohol and drugs are also common

It's not rape if they don't fight back

TRUTH – A common reaction is to freeze, this response is natural and often saves the victim from more harm.

People who have been raped or abused react by getting upset and crying

TRUTH – Reactions vary greatly and can include crying but also could be: feeling numb; being in denial and needing to pretend nothing happened; anger at self or others or the world in general; not wanting to appear weak by crying.

The victim is partly to blame if they were drunk or dressed provocatively

TRUTH – Rape or abuse is ALWAYS the fault of the person who chooses to commit the crime. While we can take precautions to protect ourselves we have the right to wear and drink what we like without experiencing sexual violence.



There is no right or wrong way to react to sexual violence.

Cheshire East
01260 697900

Cheshire West and Chester
01244 907710

Halton
01928 477980

Knowsley
0151 218 7960


St. Helens
01744 877987

Warrington
01925 221546


To make a referral, or for advice and information, you can visit us online, email, or call on

0330 363 0063

www.rapecentre.org.uk
support@rapecentre.org.uk

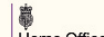
 @RapeSupport

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You are not alone. We're here to help.

Supporting a Survivor

If someone you care about has experienced rape or sexual abuse, here's some advice on supporting them.

rasasc  **Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre**

for adults, children and young people in Cheshire and Merseyside



If someone you care about has experienced rape or sexual abuse, we hope the information provided here can help you support them and cope with what has happened.

Self-care

Watching someone you care about in distress can take its toll on you, particularly if they are taking emotions out on those closest to them or needing a great deal of comfort.

It is very important to remember to take care of yourself. You can only continue to be there for them if you make sure you have enough physical and emotional energy. So make sure you get some time for yourself, treat yourself from time to time and find some support for yourself – whether this is a trusted friend or a professional.

Responses to rape or sexual abuse

There is no single reaction to rape or sexual abuse, everyone deals with things in their own way. Reactions can range from extreme distress and frequent crying to complete denial and needing to carry on as normal.

People often experience a range of emotions such as anger, hurt, loss, fear, needing to regain control and often self-blame. There is no set period for healing and these strong feelings can last for a long period of time, or even emerge months, or years, after the assault took place.

Flashbacks and nightmares

It is common for people who have been raped or sexually abused to re-live the trauma through nightmares or intrusive memories (flashbacks). Reassure them that they are safe and ask what they need to help calm down. Sometimes this could just be the sound of your voice.



How can I help?

Here's some things you should do:

Believe – people hardly ever make up or exaggerate rape or abuse – why would they?

Be patient – listen and let them know you want to be there but don't push for details or for them to open up before they are ready.

Manage expectations – be realistic about what support you can offer and remember you could be needed over a long period of time so encourage them not to be completely dependent on you.

Let them guide you – when someone is raped or abused all control is taken away so it is important that they feel in control while recovering. Let them tell you what they need, offer them choices and allow them to arrange appointments and make plans for themselves where possible.

Encourage and praise – notice small steps forwards and acknowledge their bravery, it is brave for a survivor just to admit what happened and try to work through it.

Offer comfort or space – if it is your partner let them know you are there for physical comfort if they need it but leave the choice to them, give them space if that is what they need.

Here's some things you should not do:

Pass judgement or question their response – guilt and shame are frequently feelings experienced by survivors so they will probably analyse everything they did or could have done differently. Hearing anything from you that suggests they have contributed to what happened or should have responded differently will hold back recovery.

Take matters into your own hands – you may feel angry about someone you care about being hurt but acting on this anger will mean they worry about you getting hurt or in trouble and also takes the control of the situation away from them.

Pressure them to take action or seek counselling – it is useful to find out about what support and courses of action are available but the survivor needs to make these decisions in their own time.

Tell them to forget about it – it is not as simple as this, survivors often have intrusive thoughts and memories that they need to work through and this can take a long time.

Pressure them to remember – if they have gaps in memory this could possibly be their brain protecting them for traumatic events.

Extreme and unhealthy responses

If the person you are supporting is reacting or coping in an extreme or unhealthy way (such as self-harm, alcohol or drugs), remember you do not need to be an expert or to be able to fix everything.

Encourage them to seek professional support and perhaps seek professional advice yourself. Do not judge the way they are dealing with things, it may be the only way they can get through the day right now.

Do what you can to ensure their and other people's safety and most importantly just let them know you care.