

## INFORMATION FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

### Emotional Concerns

As a result of sexual assault, you may experience a wide range of reactions and feelings that you may find upsetting. It is important to realize that these reactions and feelings are NORMAL reactions of women and men who have been sexually assaulted. It is also important to know that you can and will survive these feelings. Also, if you do not have these feelings at this time, please know that this reaction is also normal (though you may find these emotions surfacing later on if something reminds you of the assault).

- ⇒ **Shock and numbness:** wondering what to do first, whom to tell, unsure of what has happened.
- ⇒ **Shame and humiliation:** feeling personal violation and degradation.
- ⇒ **Fear:** that you will be hurt again.
- ⇒ **Anger:** at the person who hurt you, at the world in general, angry for 'no reason', and sometimes at yourself.
- ⇒ **Dirtiness:** feeling "damaged", perhaps wanting to take many showers/baths, wanting to hide.
- ⇒ **Guilt:** feeling that the assault was your fault or that you "should have" done something differently.
- ⇒ **Powerlessness and helplessness:** feeling that you have no control over your own life/body.
- ⇒ **Distrust:** feeling suspicious of other people, being very cautious.
- ⇒ **Fright:** feeling that you do not want to be alone, being easily startled, having nightmares or trouble sleeping.
- ⇒ **Sexual fear:** feeling that you want to stop sexual relations with the significant person in your life, or that you will never enjoy sexual experiences again, or feeling that sex is now "meaningless" and having sexual contact often with people who you do not care about.

Talking with the people in your support system (trusted friends or relatives) or with a counselor can be VERY helpful if you are having feelings that upset or confuse you. You can call the following numbers if you would like more information on how to find someone to talk to:

KSC Counseling Center, 358-2437  
Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention, 352-3782

### Medical Concerns

We strongly urge you to take care of yourself. It is a good idea to schedule a follow-up physical exam/gynecology appointment 4-6 weeks after an assault, even if you saw a doctor right after the assault occurred. There are many potential medical concerns that may result from an assault. You may have more peace of mind if you follow through with an examination,

testing, and follow-up than if you "wait and see what happens" physically. If you choose not to have an exam at this time, and if you experience any physical problems or medical concerns in the future, please speak with a physician. If you would like to talk with someone about medical concerns and options, please call your primary care physician or one of the following numbers:

KSC Health Services 358-2450  
Cheshire Medical Center (rape kit within 72 hours of assault) 354-5400  
Planned Parenthood 352-6898

### Relationships and Behavioral Concerns

Each survivor responds uniquely to an assault. Some additional after-effects that you may experience are listed below. These concerns may arise at various times, in varying intensities, and in varying combinations. If these symptoms are interfering with your life, please find support and work toward healing.

- ◆ **Trust:** it may be difficult to trust even those who are close to you.
- ◆ **Isolation and alienation:** at times, you may feel that you are the "only one" and that nobody else will ever understand how you are feeling.
- ◆ **Changes in sleeping:** you may have trouble getting to sleep, staying asleep, or you may be sleeping many more hours than usual.
- ◆ **Fatigue and exhaustion:** much of your energy is committed to keeping your emotions in check or trying to forget, and this can make you very tired. You may also find it difficult to concentrate.
- ◆ **Nightmares and flashbacks:** you may experience bad dreams or nightmares - these may or may not include symbols that remind you directly of the assault. Flashbacks are intense feelings (sometimes including smell, sight and sound) that make you feel as if you are experiencing the assault again - something has triggered your mind to remember the event and this is a protective bodily response to encourage you to find safety. Both nightmares and flashbacks can feel very frightening and intense, and it is often helpful to find support to cope with these events.
- ◆ **Changes in emotional intimacy with others:** it may be difficult for you to feel close and safe with people who previously felt comforting to you, and you may find yourself withdrawing emotionally and/or physically from others. Or, you may feel that you need to be constantly close with someone both emotionally and physically, and you may feel more dependent on others than you typically are comfortable with.
- ◆ **Concern about "bumming" other people or upsetting others:** if you talk about the assault.
- ◆ **Changes in eating behaviors:** both over-eating and under-eating.
- ◆ **Negative feelings about your body.**
- ◆ **Disinterest in self-care.**

Legal and Mediation Concerns

If you would like to know your options for reporting the assault to legal authorities or to Keene State's Judicial Affairs/Dispute Resolution Office, or if you have already made a report and would like to understand what to expect next, please contact one of the following offices. The people in these offices will support whatever decision you ultimately want to make, and you may have many more choices than you realize.

Mark Schmidl-Gagne, Dispute Resolution Coordinator 358-2840

Mona Anderson, Coordinator of the Sexual Assault/Harassment Education & Prevention Program 358-2435

Lyndi Horn, Cheshire County, Victim/Witness Services Director 355-3013

Monadnock Center for Violence Prevention 352-3782

Campus Safety 358-2228

If you want to learn more about sexual assault, but you aren't quite ready to talk to a counselor, please check out some of these resources. They include information about how to begin healing, what feelings and behaviors may change after an assault and how to deal with those changes, and stories and statistics that show you aren't the only one.

### INTERNET LINKS

<http://www.rainn.org/>  
<http://www.callrape.com/>  
<http://www.welcometobarbados.org>  
<http://www.mcvprevention.org>  
<http://www.911rape.org>

### BOOKS

\* I Never Called It Rape ~ Robin Warshaw

\* Free of the Shadows: Recovering from Sexual Violence ~ Caren Adams & Jennifer Fay

Everything You Need to Know When You Are the Male Survivor of Rape or Sexual Assault ~ John J. Lavallo

\* Who's Afraid of the Dark: A Forum of Truth, Support, and Assurance for Those Affected by Rape ~ edited by Cynthia Carosella

Coping with Date Rape and Acquaintance Rape ~ Andrea Parrot

\* If You Are Raped: What Every Woman Needs to Know ~ Kathryn M. Johnson

\* If She Is Raped: A Guidebook for Husbands, Fathers, and Male Friends ~ Alan McEvoy & Jeff Brookings

\* Books available for check out from the Counseling Center lending library

### **24-Hour anonymous/confidential telephone hotlines** (someone who will listen and understand)

1-800-656-HOPE ~ a RAINN hotline  
calls will be answered by the nearest crisis center in your area code  
357-5505 Samaritans Hotline