



The Myths (False Beliefs) and Facts about Sexual Violence

The Book of Lies and Bulls**t

Sexual Assault is surrounded by many beliefs, and most of these beliefs are false or myths. For example, that Sexual assault is an *uncontrolled act of lust*- this is not true.

The truth from research is that most offenders plan their attacks.

There is also a belief that *How women dress and behave* contributes to their sexual assault. The truth from research is that sexual assault is not caused by the look or behaviour of the victim.

Myth	Fact
It doesn't happen very often	One in 3-4 girls and 1 in 4-7 boys experience some form of sexual assault before the age of 18. One in four adult women has experienced some form of sexual violence as an adult.
Rape is usually committed by strangers	Most rapes occur at home. In both adult rape and Child sexual assault- the offender is more often a relative, friend, neighbour or acquaintance.
Rape is a 'spur of the moment' act	Most rapes are planned carefully in advance and situations are set up so that rape can take place. An offender is capable of raping again and again.
Men rape because they are sexually frustrated	Rape is an act of violence. This is another way of saying men cannot control themselves and is actually insulting to men! Many offenders are often in sexual relationships at the time of the rape and many perpetrators of child sexual abuse are married or in relationships at the time of the abuse.
Women 'ask for it' by the way they dress or behave	This is like saying that someone wants to be robbed because they have money in their pocket. Offenders look for targets they think they can hit, not women who dress and behave in a particular way. NOBODY asks to be hurt or degraded.
Only young women are raped	Females aged from 4 months to 92 years have been reported raped. Rape is an act of Violence and can happen at any time in a person's life.
Men who rape and men who sexually abuse children are mentally ill and can't help themselves	Many offenders plan and set up the rape. Child sexual abusers may target a child and 'groom' them for abuse. Many perpetrators of sexual violence hold responsible jobs and are part of their community. Perpetrators come from all walks of life.

Rape and child sexual abuse only happen in certain groups, neighbourhoods, cultures, etc.	Rape and child sexual abuse happen across all cultures, in all countries and all socio economic groups.
Rape or child sexual abuse 'damage' a woman	Rape and child sexual abuse are traumatic events that have impacts on women's lives. However, women and children can and do recover from the impacts of rape and abuse.
It is only abuse if it is violent	Abuse does not necessarily involve aggression or anger. Abuse often involves adults exploiting their power over children, and using children as objects rather than respecting their rights as young people.
It's not sexual assault if those involved have had sex with each other before	Consent must be given for every occasion of intimacy. If consent is withdrawn that must be respected. Being married does not mean permanent consent, consent last night does not mean consent tonight and consent to one act does not mean consent to others. Absence of 'no' is not consent. When negotiating a sexual encounter, both parties have a responsibility to ensure the other is consenting. If a person is affected by alcohol or other drugs to the point that they do not know what they are doing, it is a crime to have opportunistic sex with them.
People lie about child abuse for attention and sympathy	Research shows that it is very rare for a person to state they were abused when they were not; however, "false negative reports" of abuse are common e.g. many adults state that they were not abused as children when they were. Police and court statistics also demonstrate that it is very rare for a person to make up a claim of child abuse.
A sex offender is easy to spot	Sex offenders come from every class, profession, age and culture. They are not confined to any particular group or activity. They are usually 'nice' and social. This is how they gain access to their victims, who think nothing of inviting them into their home or getting in their car.

Remember: Sexual violence is ALWAYS the fault of the perpetrator.

References:

Liverpool Women's Resource Centre www.lwrc.org.au

ASCA www.asca.org.au