

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME?

There are many notions of what rape is, who gets raped, who the rapist is, and where such crimes occur. Many of us have never really thought about attacks until they happen to us. And after a sexual assault, many of us still think, "If only I had... I wouldn't have been raped."

Maybe if we knew some of the *facts* about rape, we would learn that we as victims/survivors are not to blame.

Myth: It could never happen to me. *Reality:* All women are potential rape victims: females of any age, race, class, religion, occupation, education, or physical description.

Myth: Most rapes occur as a "spur of the moment" act in a dark alley by a stranger.

Reality: Most rapes are planned and often occur in one's home. Many times the offender is a relative, friend, neighbor, or other acquaintance of the victim. A rapist will rape again and again, generally in the same area of town and in the same manner.

Myth: Rape is primarily a sexual crime. *Reality:* Rape is a violent assault that is acted out sexually. It violates not only the woman's personal integrity, but also her sense of safety and control over her life.

Myth: Women secretly want to be raped. *Reality:* Fantasy is not the real thing, and women who do fantasize about rape usually think of rape only as aggressive sex. Their fantasies do not reflect what rape really is: a violent, often brutal, terrorizing, and humiliating assault.

Myth: Most rapes are inter-racial. *Reality:* The overwhelming majority of rapes involve persons of the same race or culture.

Myth: Rape is a non-violent crime. *Reality:* Rape is a violent crime -- 87% of rapists either carry a weapon or threaten the victim with violence or death. Forcible rape is increasing in this country, more than any other violent crime.

Myth: Rape happens only to young women. *Reality:* Rape victims range in age from 4 months to 92 years. The Los Angeles Rape & Battering Hotline has counseled 6 year old rape survivors as well as women in their 80's. Rape is an act of force for which all women must be prepared. Women of all ages, socio-economic groups, neighborhoods and lifestyles can be victims.

Myth: Women are "asking for it" by their dress or actions. *Reality:* Again, most rapes are planned. Research shows that rapists are looking for available, vulnerable targets - not women who dress in a particular way. No person asks to be hurt or degraded.

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