



SEXUAL ASSAULT RESISTANCE TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY WOMEN

Daniel Schwarz, Ph.D.
Licensed Psychologist
PPA Interpersonal Violence Task Force

The need to establish a comprehensive approach to sexual violence prevention on college campuses has never been greater. Young women attending a college or university are most likely to be assaulted within the first two years, with the overall incidence of sexual assault estimated to be between 20%-25 %. The consequences of being assaulted while in college can result in an increase in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, and other negative health outcomes.

Today, colleges and universities are under increased pressure to provide clear and effective educational material and programming in order to prevent sexual assault. The bystander approach has been utilized as a way of changing the social environment on campuses and to encourage men and women to intervene if and when they observe potential inappropriate behaviors. In such programs, men are approached as allies and not as potential perpetrators.

Workshops that have been designed to decrease the risk of women being assaulted and helping women to resist sexual assault have had inconsistent results. In particular, most studies have taken place on a single site and not at more than one college or university.

A recent study by Senn, Eliasziw, Barata, Thurston, Newby-Clark, and Hobden, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, June 2015, studied the impact of a new four year college small group sexual assault resistance program that was compared to providing brochures on sexual assault. The goal of the study was to determine whether the workshop intervention could reduce the 1 year incidence of completed rape among first year female students at three universities. The value of this kind of study is that it provided specific training for first year female students in an attempt to decrease the likelihood of sexual assault. The important components of the training included a unit on self-defense, learning to trust your own intuition and small group discussion regarding a variety of scenarios that young women often face in social situations on a college campus. The training also focused on healthy sexual behavior and alcohol use. The results of the study indicated that women who participated in the 12 hour training were 4.6 % less likely to be raped and 5.9 % less likely to have someone attempt to rape them.

Given the above recent research, the following recommendations are offered for female students, these same recommendations are valid for male students who are on dates:

1) Incoming freshmen and transfer students should inquire from the college counseling services

or orientation services at the institution they will be attending about the kind of training available to prevent sexual assault and resources available to turn to in the event of an assault on campus.

2) Students and their parents can ask the university about the process of reporting an assault. Access the campus police phone number and program it into your cell phone. Make use of the campus security escort service any time after dark.

3) Be prepared to clarify any misunderstandings that some men may infer from your dress or behavior.

4) When on dates:

a) Let a date know from the start that you can handle yourself and share the decisions about where you are going and what you will be doing.

b) Arrange a double date with a couple you know well if you are seeing the guy/girl for the first time.

c) Always let someone know where you are going, when you expect to return and who you are with. Let your date know that someone else knows you are with him.

d) If you begin to feel uncomfortable, pay attention to your intuition and begin to plan a way to leave.

e) If you walk into a party where there are no other females, leave immediately. It could be a set up for a gang rape.

f) Always carry money with you. If a situation gets risky, call a friend or family member or take a taxi home. In a dangerous situation don't hesitate to call the police.

g) When going on a blind date, always go to a public place like a movie or coffee shop.

5) If you experience a sexual assault seek medical attention immediately at a local hospital or emergency room. You can also contact campus police and seek support from the college counseling or health services.

6) Assertiveness Training to help women to communicate in a direct and firm manner with someone who is pressuring them sexually is recommended. Avoiding the use of alcohol or drugs that may cloud judgement is strongly recommended.

7) Do not engage in sexting or sending inappropriate pictures of yourself or others to anyone using the computer.

For Men:

1) Know that you are expressing hostility and aggression if you try to force or coerce someone to engage in sex.

2) Women who say "No" to sex are not rejecting you as a person. They are expressing their desire not to participate in a single act.

3) Accept a woman's decision not to have sexual contact. "No" means "No".

4) Do not assume that just because a woman dresses in a sexy manner and flirts that she wants to have sexual intercourse.

- 5) Do not assume that previous permission for sexual contact applies to the current situation.
- 6) Do not assume that paying for a date means that your partner owes you sexual favors.
- 7) Avoid use of alcohol and drugs as it may cloud your judgement.
- 8) Do not engage in sexting or sending inappropriate pictures of yourself or others online.

Here are some links to additional resources in Pennsylvania and nationally to contact for support and training.

Phone numbers to call

911

National Sexual Assault Hotline (RAINN) 800-656-4673

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233 or 1800-787-3224

National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline 866-331-9474

Trevor Project 866-488-7386 National Suicide Hotline for Gay and Questioning Youth

Training and websites

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape www.PCAR.com

National Sexual Violence Resource Center www.nsvrc.org

Clery Center Security on Campus www.clerycenter.org

(SAFER) Strengthens student-led movements to combat sexual and interpersonal violence in campus communities www.safercampus.org

Not Alone- Together Against Sexual Assault www.notalone.gov/schools/

It's On Us www.It'sonus.org