



say it

safety awareness youth information training
straight talking about sexual violence



FOREWORD

This booklet is the culmination of a lot of research and investigation into the needs of young people in relation to education and awareness of sexual violence. Feedback from participants of the S.A.Y.I.T. Programme and opinions and views expressed by our clients over the years have also influenced the content. We would like to thank all the staff in Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre for their support and encouragement over the past 8 years of delivering S.A.Y.I.T. to hundreds of young people in schools and youth groups.

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"Knowledge is Power" S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment



SILENCE



THE KERRY RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

The Centre is based in Tralee and services the County of Kerry. Professionally qualified, accredited counsellors provide a specialised, confidential and free counselling service to female and male survivors of Rape, Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse.

We are open Monday to Friday; from 9am to 5pm. Appointments are also available outside of these hours.

SERVICES:

- Counselling, which includes talking to a counsellor in person or on the phone
- Talking and listening if that is all you want
- For survivors of sexual violence - rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse
- Support and information for family and friends
- We see teenagers and adults
- Support with Garda Statements and going to Court
- 24hr on call service for the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) at Tralee General Hospital
- Education and Awareness training for schools and other groups
- Research around the needs of people using our service



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been written primarily for young people who have been raped or sexually assaulted. If this has happened to you, perhaps you are struggling to cope? Do you think no-one understands what you have gone through and how it makes you feel? Maybe you think you are losing your mind?...Do you try to do everything possible not to talk or think about what has happened?

In our experience people who understand their reactions after an assault are better at coping and so recover faster. As such the focus of this booklet is on common thoughts, feelings and behaviours following an assault as well as offering practical tips on how to cope. Topics like the law, myths about rape and sexual assault, staying safe and who you can contact if you have been assaulted are also covered.

TIPS TO HELP YOU USE THIS BOOKLET

This booklet might be difficult to use if you are coming to terms with being raped or sexually assaulted. You might find that concentrating on it for any length of time is difficult and that some of the things you read are upsetting. To help you to get the most from this booklet, here are a few tips on how to use it.

- Reading the whole booklet from beginning to end in one go might be difficult for you right now, so perhaps you could read it in small chunks and for a few minutes at a time.
- If there are parts that upset you it is probably because they remind you of what has happened. These feelings are normal and will pass with time.
- If there are parts of the booklet that you don't understand perhaps you could ask a parent or friend who knows what has happened to you to help you.

"It's real life not just what happens on soaps or TV."
S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment



SAY IT

SAFETY AWARENESS YOUTH INFORMATION TRAINING

Provides young people with age appropriate information and an opportunity to explore issues relating to sexual violence in a safe environment with experienced facilitators. Sexual Violence is an issue that concerns everybody. Rape and Sexual Assault are seriously under-reported crimes. The secrecy and stigma that surround sexual violence prevent the victim from telling about their experience or looking for support. Statistics show that 33% of women and 25% of men have been affected by some type of sexual abuse in childhood, (SAVI Report, Dublin RCC, 2002). Crisis intervention and support are vital but we also need to look towards education and prevention. Recent surveys, (Amnesty International and the Irish Examiner, Red C Poll) clearly show that a high percentage of people still completely or partially blame women in many instances of rape and sexual assault. We are always aware that sexual violence may be an issue for someone in every group that we work with. Bearing this in mind, we reassure participants that personal information is never part of our sessions.

THE CONTENT OF THE SESSIONS WILL ALLOW PARTICIPANTS TO

- Look at the effects of sexual violence on victims, family, friends and the wider community
- Discuss common myths and attitudes; they prevent victims from telling and they actually support perpetrators!
- Examine case studies (fictional) and Audio / DVD recordings.
- Learn about legal procedure in this area
- Identify potentially dangerous people and situations
- Explore choices around responsible and risk reducing behaviour
- Learn how to give good support
- Know where to get help



"No one ever speaks to us in this way about this subject...very informative." SA Y.I.T. Participant Comment

THE LAW

RAPE is when a man forces his penis into the vagina of a woman who does not consent to it...and where the man knows that she does not consent...or is reckless as to whether she does or does not consent (In other words he knows it is not what she wants and he does it anyway).

RAPE UNDER SECTION 4 defines sexual assault that includes penetration (however slight) of the anus or mouth by the penis, or penetration (however slight) of the vagina by any object held or manipulated by another person.

SEXUAL ASSAULT is a crime that can be committed by both men and women against men and women. Different types of sexual assault include

- Objects or parts of the body (e.g. a finger) being put into someone's vagina or anus when that person doesn't want it to happen.
- Someone being touched in a sexual way that makes him or her feel uncomfortable or frightened. This could be through their clothes.
- Someone being made to sexually stimulate themselves using their hands or fingers (known as masturbation) or putting objects into their vagina or anus, when they don't want to do it.

Don't worry if this sounds confusing. The most important thing to remember is that being pressurised or forced to take part in any sexual activity, when you don't want to, is a crime!

"I came to court because I wanted justice, not just for me but also for any other girl out there. I wanted him to know that he cannot do something like this and get away with it." **Victim Statement**



WHO SHOULD I TELL?

Firstly, it is important that you tell someone as soon as possible and not keep it to yourself. Telling someone what has happened means that you can get the support you need. The person you do talk to should be someone that you trust and feel comfortable with. You have a number of choices of people you can tell: a friend, parent, G.P., teacher or counsellor. You can also speak to the Gardaí.

You can contact the Gardaí immediately by dialling 999 or 112 or ringing your local Garda Station. You are entitled to ask to speak to a male or female garda. When you talk to the Gardaí you will need to give them as much information about the assault, as possible, such as what happened, where and when. If you know who assaulted you, tell the Gardaí who it is and how you know them. What you tell the Gardaí will be recorded in writing or on video and might be used as evidence if the case goes to court. The Gardaí understand how distressing it can be to talk about an assault and will take things slowly. An adult that you trust and feel comfortable with, or a rape crisis counsellor, can also support you whilst you are talking to the Gardaí. If English is not your first language then the Gardaí will arrange for an interpreter.

If you can't face anyone at the moment then there are plenty of helplines who will not only listen but offer you advice on where you can go and get help when you are ready to do so. Telephone numbers for these helplines are at the back of this booklet.

"I found out about things most people would usually be too embarrassed or confused to talk about."

S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment

IS EVERYTHING CONFIDENTIAL?

This depends on who you have told and what you have told them. As a young person you do have a right to confidentiality, but if the professional person you have spoken to is worried about your safety they might need to speak to a doctor, psychologist, social worker or parent. Before they do this they will discuss this with you so you will have the chance to say how you feel. You can discuss any worries that you might have about this and the person you have spoken to has to take your concerns seriously. Usually when someone does pass on private information about you it is because they are worried about you and want to make sure that you are getting the right support.

WHAT'S A SEXUAL ASSAULT TREATMENT UNIT?

You might be given the option to go to a Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU). Specialist doctors will ask you about what happened and then examine your body to try and find evidence of what happened to you. Before you go for the examination, try not to shower, wash your clothes, go to the loo (although this may be difficult) or have a drink. Doing so could get rid of evidence, which may be helpful in a Garda investigation.

The most important thing they do at SATU is to make sure that you are okay. They will advise you about how to deal with a possible pregnancy, check you for sexually transmitted infections, and sort out treatment if it is necessary. They can also arrange for you to get support from local services. The Gardaí will talk to you about how a criminal charge can be brought against the person who assaulted you and how they will try to get your case to court if that is what you want. You don't have to go to court, you may just want help and support without reporting to the Gardaí.



Some people have some really weird ideas about assault. These ideas might come from family, friends, magazines or TV but they are not true. But if you believe them they can upset you, especially if you have been assaulted. So let's get the facts straight just in case you have a few ideas lurking around in your head.

MYTH: Rape very rarely happens and it will never happen to me

FACT: 42% of women and 28% of men experience some type of sexual abuse in their lifetime (S.A.V.I. Report, Dublin RCC 2002). That's a lot so not as rare as you might think!

MYTH: Only good-looking girls in tight clothes or "sluts" get raped

FACT: Rapists often choose to attack people they think are easy to get at, not because of how people dress or if they have a reputation. People who are assaulted can be of any age, sex, religion, come from any culture or background and be gay, straight or bisexual. However, we know that women aged 16-24 are at a greater risk of being raped than any other group. And let's sort out the "slut" thing. Women have a right to dress any way they want. It is the rapist who makes the choice to rape them.

MYTH: When it comes to sex girls say "no" but they mean "yes"

FACT: It's simple no means no! If two people want to have sex with each other it should be something that they both agree to.

MYTH: A rapist is more likely to be a mad stranger, who can't control what he does.

FACT: This is not true. Most rapists are men with no history of mental illness and most people who are raped know who attacked them. Rapists often think carefully about who they are targeting, where they will commit the crime and what they will do, which shows they are planning ahead and are in control of their actions. People who are "out of control" do not take the time to warn someone not to scream or tell them not to tell anyone about the rape.

"Great benefit in eliminating misunderstandings associated with sexual abuse."

S.A.V.I.T. Participant Comment

MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: Rape is just rough sex

FACT: Rape is an act of violence and is something the other person has not agreed to. People like to have sex in different ways but if one of them does not agree to sex then it is rape or sexual assault.

MYTH: Weapons are frequently used in sexual assaults

FACT: Weapons are rarely used. The weapons used are fear and intimidation. Remember most people are raped or sexually assaulted by someone they know.

MYTH: Alcohol and Drugs turn people into rapists

FACT: Drugs and alcohol are never the cause of rape or sexual assault. It is the attacker who is committing the crime not the drugs and/or alcohol. If the victim is drunk or has taken drugs they are not to blame for the attack. They may be to blame for being drunk or high but only the person committing the rape is responsible for the attack. It is not okay for the attacker to blame drink or drugs for their actions or to target someone who is drunk or high to cause them harm.

MYTH: People often lie about being raped

FACT: Only a very small proportion (1-2%) of reported rapes are false. This is the same percentage of false reports as for all other crimes. Most people who have been raped or sexually assaulted tell the truth. In fact most people do not tell anyone because they are too ashamed and scared and think they won't be believed.

MYTH: If a girl or boy dresses in a certain way they are "asking for it"

FACT: This is not true. The only way you can be sure someone wants sex is if they actually tell you. Just because people dress in a certain way doesn't mean they want sex. It's like saying all people who wear hoodies are troublemakers. Maybe they want to attract someone but that is very different to wanting to have sex with them. Nobody asks to be raped or sexually assaulted.



MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH: Men who rape men are gay

FACT: Most men who sexually assault other men think of themselves as straight. Sexual assault is more about violence, anger, domination and control over another person, than being attracted to them or wanting sex.

MYTH: Rape is only rape if you have injuries

FACT: In some cases people who have been raped have injuries outside or inside their bodies, but not always. Just because someone hasn't got any injuries doesn't mean they weren't raped. The real damage is emotional- this kind of injury can cause suffering long after the attack.

MYTH: It is not rape if it is your boyfriend or if you were flirting or kissing beforehand

FACT: Rape is about forcing someone to have sex. It doesn't matter if that person is your boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife, or what happened beforehand.

"Highlighted different kinds of abuse that take place every day."

S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment

HOW WILL I FEEL AND HOW DO I COPE?

Being assaulted is very frightening and it is not surprising that most people feel upset and find it difficult to cope. If you have been assaulted, you might notice a number of changes in how you think, feel and behave. These changes are very normal and for many people they only last a couple of weeks. This section will help you understand the most common reactions experienced after an assault and will give you practical tips on how to cope.

TRAUMATIC STRESS REACTIONS

Anyone can be involved in a traumatic experience. Examples of traumatic experiences are: train, plane or car crashes (man-made disasters); earthquakes, floods, volcano eruptions (natural disasters); stabbings, shootings, bombings, war, rape and sexual assault (acts of violence). These events are frightening and therefore it is normal for people to be upset by them.

How people feel, think and behave afterwards are often called "traumatic stress reactions". You might find that your mind keeps replaying what has happened, a bit like a DVD that you can't stop. This is because your brain is trying to make sense of what happened. You may find that:

- You can't stop upsetting thoughts or images popping up in your head
- At times it feels like the attack is happening all over again
- You have bad dreams
- You become very frightened or upset by things that remind you of what happened

"My sense of safety and my "happy go lucky" attitude was gone. I am working on getting it back"

Victim Statement

AND HOW DO I COPE?

HOW WILL I FEEL

You might find that you try and push these thoughts and images away as they are upsetting. In the short term it might be helpful but after a while the number of thoughts and images you have will increase!

These problems are often caused by something that has reminded you of the assault. It could be something you have seen (a person who looks like the one who attacked you, going by the place where the assault took place or watching a TV programme about rape), a sound, a smell, being touched in a particular way or being made to talk about what happened. This can be very upsetting so you might try and deal with it by keeping out of the way of any person, place or thing that might be a reminder of what happened.

When we are faced with danger, our bodies pump out adrenaline (a chemical in your body) to help us get the extra energy we need to survive. This "red alert" system helps us to run away, fight or freeze (a bit like a rabbit when it comes face to face with the headlights of a car) After an assault, sometimes this system gets stuck, and so messages are constantly sent to our brain to tell us everything is dangerous even when this is not true. This can cause us to over-react to everything. You might find that:

- You constantly feel that you are in danger
- You feel jumpy and on edge
- It's difficult to sleep at night because of all the thoughts and images in your head
- You feel angry or irritable with friends or family
- You can't concentrate on anything

"The first day I walked into the Centre was one of the most terrifying days of my life, but it was also the first day of the rest of my life."

Client Statement

DEALING WITH UPSETTING IMAGES IN YOUR HEAD

Sometimes it is hard to stop distressing pictures racing around in your head. They are often about what has happened to you and they might make you feel sad, angry or somehow to blame. When you are alone and not very busy or if you are reminded of what happened, this is the time that they come to mind.

You can learn to control these pictures and the upsetting thoughts and feelings that go with them by doing this simple exercise:

Imagine you are standing in a field watching a bright red hot air balloon slowly go up into the air. You watch it go up and up high into the sky until all you can see is a small red dot far away. You can think of the pictures in your head in the same way. Just let them float through your mind until they are a distant pinpoint. Acknowledge that they are happening, but do not try to stop them in any way. Remember that trying not to think of something makes it more likely to come to mind.

An experienced counsellor will help you to look at different, practical ways to deal with your feelings, whatever they may be.

"The Changes that have taken place in my life over the past two years of attending the Centre to some may seem small, but to me it's like I have climbed a mountain." Client Statement



NIGHT TIMES TACKLING

Night times can be really difficult. You might find that you wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep. This is often a time when thoughts about the assault can happen most. You may experience flashbacks, or get woken by bad dreams/nightmares.

YOU COULD:

- Try and be really active during the day and avoid naps, so that when you go to bed you are really sleepy
- Have a warm bath and a hot milky drink before you go to bed
- Avoid drinks with caffeine in them like tea, coffee and soft drinks. Caffeine puts your body on "red alert" and you don't need any more at the moment!
- If you wake up in the middle of the night, don't try and go back to sleep until you actually feel sleepy again, otherwise you are likely to toss and turn. You might go into another room and listen to your favourite music or try reading a book or a favourite magazine.
- Have a nightlight or bedside lamp on so that when you wake up you can see the room.
- Remember nightmares are just dreams and they are not real.



LEARNING TO RELAX

Sometimes, you might become very frightened or upset by things that remind you of what happened and learning to relax might help you feel better.

TRY THIS RELAXATION EXERCISE:

Create a calming picture in your head - it could be somewhere you have been or an imaginary place that you make up. Try to make the picture as real as you can by imagining what you can hear, see, smell, feel, and touch.

For example, if you are imagining a beach, can you feel the sun on your face, can you hear the waves crashing on the shore, and can you feel the sand between your toes?

"I felt less confident, marked by the event, singled out. It was not my fault but I still felt different to other women who had not gone through this."

Victim Statement



DEPRESSION

Feeling fed up or unhappy is common after an assault. These feelings might come and go but sometimes you just can't shift them. Depression can happen because you feel unattractive, think things will never get better or because you feel you have no-one to talk to and no-one that understands you. You might notice that you:

- Can't stop crying
- Have trouble falling asleep at night
- Feel constantly tired and lacking in energy
- Are eating loads of junk food or not eating at all
- Have problems concentrating
- Have stopped doing things you used to enjoy
- Go out less often and just want to be on your own
- Feel life is not worth living

GETTING RID OF DEPRESSION

- Write about how you feel and what you are thinking about in a diary
- Listen to music
- Do some exercise like swimming, dancing or jogging
- Go for a walk and get some fresh air
- Eat regularly and as healthily as you can

Should your depression get worse, especially if you have thoughts about hurting or killing yourself, then you should speak to your GP. You could see your GP on your own, confidentially, or go with a relative or friend if you prefer. Your GP may suggest medication that will help you cope with these difficult thoughts and feelings. They may also recommend that you speak to a counsellor and can refer you to local services.

"I felt very down in myself, I didn't feel safe. For a long time I wanted everyone to stay away from me, not to touch me or hug me or anything. I would be shaking and frightened". Victim Statement

SELF-BLAME SHAME, GUILT AND

People who have been assaulted often feel ashamed, guilty or blame themselves for what happened. Shame means that you see yourself in the way you think other people see you, which might be "bad", "dirty" or "ugly". Although these thoughts are not true, at times this might make you want to hide or escape from your family or friends.

Guilt and self-blame means that you think, in some way, that the assault was your fault. You think you should have been able to predict, stop or reduce the harm done to you. For example, you might believe that you should have fought back, even though it could be dangerous to do so. It's important to remember that you could not know what was going to happen, it is not what you wanted, you did not ask for it, and it was totally beyond your control. You are not superhuman!

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS

Feelings of guilt or shame might make it difficult for you to talk with other people about what has happened. This isn't always helpful and, although it might be hard, it is often good to share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust. Talking to someone else can help you see things in a different way and make you realise you're not so bad after all. Sometimes it is easier to talk to a professional as they are not emotionally involved like family and friends.

HOW TO BE HELPFUL TO SOMEONE ELSE

Sometimes the most supportive thing you can do is LISTEN. You cannot "fix it", this can be difficult, it is never easy to see someone you care about in pain. Try not to judge, blame or question the victim. Being believed is really important for them. You can support them by listening to what they want and need, they know best themselves. Offer practical help, provide information and give choices, this will give them back some sense of control.





ANGER

At times you might think things like: everyone is getting on your nerves, that life is unfair because it happened to you or that you should just be getting over it. These thoughts are common after an assault and often lead to feelings of anger. When you're angry you might notice that you:

- Can't think clearly
- Feel hot, sweaty, tense and uptight
- Clench your teeth, make fists and shake
- Shout, swear or threaten people
- Shove, push or hit people
- Throw or break things
- Wind people up

Sometimes we might turn our angry feelings in on ourselves and this can lead to eating problems, feeling low, getting into trouble or refusing to go to school. When you are angry you might not be able to think of anything else apart from how angry you are. This will wind you up even more. Below are some tips to help you avoid getting in this state.

STOPPING ANGER

Recognise the first signs that tell you when you're getting worked up, for example clenched teeth and fists, tense muscles, a fast beating heart and stomach turns. When you notice these signs, think of a set of traffic lights and -stop, take a moment, and then go try some suggestions like:

DANGER!

- Shout out or imagine hearing the word STOP
- Stand still
- Turn away

CALM DOWN

- Take regular deep breaths. Think of calming thoughts such as:
 - "Chill out"
 - "They're not worth bothering about"
 - "I won't let it get to me"
 - "It's not fair but losing my temper will just make things worse"

LEAVE THE SITUATION

- Listen to music
- Go for a walk
- Get into a good book or computer game

"There was a lot of fear, fear of being alone, fear going out in public, a feeling of watching my back." **Victim Statement**



To cope with upsetting thoughts and feelings, you might try to block them out by doing (or thinking about doing) things that are harmful to you. You might try and hide what you are doing rather than draw attention to it; maybe you feel ashamed, afraid or worried about how other people will react. You might notice that you:

- Scratch, pick, cut or burn your skin
- Hit yourself or objects, like banging your head against the wall
- Take a drug overdose
- Swallow or put things inside your body
- Drink lots of alcohol or use street drugs

THE REASONS FOR HURTING YOURSELF MIGHT BE THAT IT:

- Helps release upsetting feelings
- Distracts you from upsetting thoughts and feelings
- Helps to show somebody else how you are feeling
- Brings you comfort or helps get you to sleep
- Is a way of punishing yourself

"I was so afraid that someone would see my cuts, it was a huge relief when my counsellor asked me was I self harming, finally I could talk about it." **Victim Statement**

COPING WITH SELF-INJURY

- Rather than hurt yourself, try something less harmful like marking your body with a red coloured pen or snapping a rubber band on the area of arm or leg that you usually focus on
- Visualise a pleasant relaxing scene like being on a beach
- Get moving - walk, run, swim or any other activity that you can manage
- Get creative - write about how you feel and what you are thinking or draw, paint or make a model
- Play or listen to music
- Distract yourself from your thoughts by watching TV, stroking a pet, cleaning up your room or playing a game.

Whether you are hurting yourself by self-injury, drugs or alcohol, it would be a good idea for you to seek professional help. Useful contact numbers are given at the back of this booklet

"I felt as though my life was in a fog, I hoped some day I would see colours again." **Victim Statement**



STAYING SAFE

- Tell someone where you are going, when you will be back and have your mobile charged and topped up with credit.
- Keep some cash aside for a taxi and only use reputable taxis that you are familiar with.
- Hang out with people who want the same things you want. Don't be forced or manipulated into doing something you really don't want to do.
- Look out for each other, stay with other people, feel safe.
- Find out what the person you are with wants and expects - you may not want the same thing. If you feel uncomfortable or scared, make an excuse and get away from them - Say "I need to go to the bathroom" or "I'm going to get a drink" and leave. Don't worry about trying to explain why you don't want to be alone with them.
- Be wary of people who don't respect you, ignore what you want, or try to make you feel guilty or foolish for saying "no".
- Avoid people who get angry or sulk when they don't get their own way, or who make you feel afraid to go against them.
- Know the effects that alcohol and drugs have on you. Alcohol and drugs lower your inhibitions, affect your reactions and lessen your ability to recognise danger. They can cause increased aggression. Your best defence is to stay sober.
- Say "NO" clearly and firmly - your wishes should be respected. Manipulating someone to do something they don't want to do is abusive.
- If you are using the internet be very careful who you are chatting to online. Unfortunately some people use the internet as a way of meeting young people purely for the purpose of rape and sexual assault.
- During holiday times or when abroad you are more likely to drop your guard and forget your safety tips.
- If a person or situation feels wrong to you, it probably is.....Trust your Instincts!

REMEMBER:

- Don't blame yourself if you are not able to stop the attack. It is **NEVER** your fault; You may be too shocked to do anything; Most people do not fight back in these situations as they are too frightened.
- The perpetrator is the person who decides to commit this crime and has no regard for what the victim feels or wants.
- Blaming victims, asking questions like "Why didn't you scream?" imply that they are to blame. This serves the perpetrator very well!

IMPACT ON SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

SCHOOL

For some people, going back to school soon after an assault is important. This is because their friends are there and they are back into a familiar routine, which helps to keep their mind off frightening and unsettling emotions. But what if this isn't how you feel and the last thing you want to do is go back to school? This might be because:

YOU WERE ASSAULTED AT SCHOOL

Going back to where you were assaulted is an extremely difficult and frightening thing to do. If you cannot face going back, maybe you could talk to the Principal regarding support and any suggestions they might have. Your parents might help you with this.

THE PERSON WHO ASSAULTED YOU GOES TO THE SAME SCHOOL

If going back to school puts your safety and wellbeing at risk then you can't be expected to return. Think about speaking to your parents or even the Gardaí involved in your case. There may be other measures that could be put in place by the Gardaí or the school.

OTHER STUDENTS TALKING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU

Sometimes gossip and rumours spread around the school and if it is about you, it can make you feel awful. You could tell a teacher (schools have a duty to tackle bullying) or your parents. You could also let your friends know, phone a helpline or use a website; they have lots of tips on how to deal with bullying.

YOU ARE TOO FRIGHTENED TO WALK OR TAKE THE BUS TO SCHOOL

It's not unusual for someone who has been assaulted to feel scared and unsafe when they are doing normal, everyday things. Maybe you could ask your friends or your brother or sister to accompany you to school. If possible your parents could give you a drive or walk with you. If you continue to feel very scared then someone like a counsellor may be able to help you cope with your fears.

IMPACT ON SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

SCHOOL YOU CAN'T FOCUS OR CONCENTRATE ON YOUR SCHOOL WORK

If you are late with your homework or your grades are not as good as they normally are, your teachers are far more likely to be supportive if they know something has happened to you. Don't be afraid to tell them that you are struggling! You do not have to tell the details to everyone, there may be one teacher that you trust that can support you. No one should be expected to continue to work in the same way as before they were assaulted.

HOME

Life at home can also change after you have experienced a rape or sexual assault. It can bring some families closer together and you may feel very comfortable and safe talking to your family about how you are feeling. However, some parents find it extremely hard to cope when their child has been assaulted. Parents might:

BLAME YOU FOR BEING ASSAULTED OR DON'T EVEN BELIEVE YOU AT ALL

When your parents behave like this it can be really upsetting and leave you feeling very alone, confused and abandoned. It can be very hard to tell your parents that they are wrong and that they have hurt you with their comments. If you can't talk to your parents you could call a helpline or talk to someone you trust.

WORRY ABOUT THE FAMILY'S REPUTATION IN THE COMMUNITY AND BLAME YOU FOR GIVING THEM A "BAD NAME"

It is not fair that your family make you feel bad for what someone else has done to you. If this situation is familiar to you, again you could call a helpline or speak to an adult you trust. It is important that someone else knows what is going on at home.

"All I could think of was getting out alive. I thought of my family, I thought maybe I could talk my way out of it. I knew what was happening, I was really scared." *Victim Statement*

IMPACT ON SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

ALWAYS ASK WHETHER YOU ARE OK AND IF YOU WANT TO TALK

Sometimes concern from your parents can make you feel like they are just being nosy! Your parents are probably just worried about you and you could try explaining to them that if you need any help you will talk to them.

ARE MORE CONTROLLING WHEN YOU GO OUT

Again, your parents are probably just worried about your safety. Sometimes parents can become over-protective because they do not want anyone to hurt you again, but this can be frustrating for you. Depending on what your parents are worried about, you could suggest compromises such as picking you up when you are ready to go home, letting them meet your friends or you could ask your friends to spend an evening at your house.

AND YOU MIGHT FEEL THAT YOU NEED TO PROTECT THEM FROM HEARING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED

Normally, being sensitive to the feelings of others is a good thing. But if this means that you end up bottling up your own feelings then you will not get the support that you need. Knowing what has happened to you may upset your parents but usually they want to know and want to help you. Most parents would prefer to support you than to think you were trying to cope on your own. Your parents can also get support for themselves from counsellors and helplines.

It is really important that you feel supported and cared for and if this is not happening at home then there are people who can help you. If the situation at home is harmful to you, agencies like social services can support you and make sure you are safe. Remember you can call a helpline anonymously and talk to someone.

"It has been a hard experience physically and emotionally. First I felt as if a part of me was missing as if something had died inside of me" *Victim Statement*

FRIENDSHIPS

Like family, friends can be a great source of support. They can listen to your problems; make you laugh and keep you company when you are bored! Having close friends around you when you are feeling upset and depressed can be really helpful and can help to lift your mood. However, there might be reasons why you don't feel like spending time with them:

YOU'RE NOT SURE IF YOU WANT YOUR FRIENDS TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED

The decision to tell your friends is down to you. It is a good idea to think about whether you want to tell all of them or just the ones that you are closest to. You might also want to think about who you can trust with such personal information. It is very upsetting if a friend goes behind your back and tells other people about your private life. If a friend does this you could ask them why they told other people. They may simply have made a mistake but if they deliberately wanted to upset and embarrass you then you might want to consider whether they are worth having as a friend.



YOUR FRIENDS AVOID TALKING ABOUT THE ASSAULT

Sometimes your friends don't know what to say or how to act if you have been assaulted. Friends can be worried that they will upset you by mentioning the assault and so they decide not to say anything. You may want to speak to your closest friend and explain that there will be times when you need support from your friends. If you are able to, you could tell them what they could do to support you. If you feel that your friends are not supportive, think about other sources of support like a counsellor, a helpline, a parent or an older brother or sister

YOUR FRIENDS ARE BLAMING YOU FOR THE ASSAULT

Listening to this type of criticism can be very upsetting. Sometimes your friends will believe the myths mentioned in this booklet and so they will not be as supportive as they could be. You could try telling your friends how hurtful and unhelpful you have found their comments. If you have a counsellor or youth worker maybe they could also meet with your friends to actually give them the facts about rape and sexual assault. If this does not change their behaviour then perhaps these are not the types of friends that you need to have around you at this time.

YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE GOING OUT WITH YOUR FRIENDS

It might be difficult for you to enjoy the things you used to do with your friends. You could tell your friends that there are some things that you do not feel like doing yet. If they are good friends then they will be patient until you begin to feel better. Remember there are lots of different activities that you can do with your friends that you may feel safer and more comfortable doing. Although talking to friends can make you feel much better, sometimes they might feel worried about what you have told them and tell an adult. You might feel betrayed but the chances are that your situation will improve if someone like a parent, teacher, counsellor or social worker is involved.

"I thought this happened because I was an attractive young woman, I purposely gained weight in the months after to become unattractive. I know now that this was wrong." **Victim Statement**

IMPACT ON SCHOOL, HOME, FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS

A boyfriend or girlfriend can be an important source of support and comfort. It is likely that this person knows you very well and you may want to tell them what has happened and how you have been feeling. They might cuddle you or kiss you to make you feel better. You might feel safe and reassured by this but it could also leave you feeling uncomfortable. This might be because:

BEING TOUCHED BRINGS BACK MEMORIES OF THE ASSAULT

If the last person to touch you in a personal way was the person who assaulted you, then it is natural for you to associate this type of touching with the assault. If you feel like this, then it is absolutely okay to say that you do not want to be kissed, cuddled or touched.

Remember that you are in charge of your own body and only you should decide when you feel ready to be physically close to someone again. This can be difficult for the other person but they can get support also and learn not to take this personally.

BEING AROUND MEN/BOYS MAKES YOU FEEL SCARED

You may feel uneasy with people whom you would normally trust, especially if the person who assaulted you was someone you knew. Although you have been hurt, try to keep in mind that most men and boys do not want to harm you. It is not always a bad thing to be aware of who is around you but if you find that you are always worried and scared then you might want to speak to a counsellor.

WHO ELSE CAN HELP?

For some people their problems never seem to get better, feel too big to sort out alone, happen a lot or affect everything they do. Speaking to family and friends is just not enough. If this sounds like you then you should get advice from a professional.

Telling a psychologist, psychiatrist, psychotherapist or counsellor what has happened can be useful. They are trained in listening and understanding people with all sorts of problems. It gives you a chance to talk about how you are feeling and they can teach you the skills to manage better. Going to see one of these people does not mean you are mad! The kind of therapy offered will depend on what you need but more importantly what you want. Sometimes families find it helpful to talk to a professional together.

There are different places that offer this kind of help. You could contact Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre or one of the other places listed at the back of this booklet. Your GP, social worker or school counsellor should also be able to give you advice about where to get support locally.

"Since the first day I met with my counsellor at the Centre, I have felt completely safe, trusted, understood and above all believed." **Client Statement**



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS COUNSELLING?

Counselling provides you with a safe, confidential space to talk to a counsellor. (It is important that the counsellor is professionally qualified and accredited). It gives you an opportunity to look at difficulties that you are experiencing because of things that have happened in your life. With support you can explore thoughts and feelings and make changes that you wish to make

HOW DOES COUNSELLING HELP?

Clients tell us that it is a huge relief to talk to someone, often for the first time. They are given time and space to talk about what has happened to them and the impact it has had on their lives. There is no pressure on the person to say or do anything. It is their choice how much they wish to talk and any changes they wish to make.

HOW LONG DOES COUNSELLING TAKE?

Each person's experience and response to that experience is unique to them. No two people will react in exactly the same way. Some people come only once; others come for weeks or months. There is no limit; it is the client's decision.

DO PEOPLE REALLY RECOVER FROM SUCH A TRAUMATIC EVENT?

Yes people can and do recover from traumatic events and experiences. Over the past 17 years we have worked with many clients who have developed healthier and happier lives.

WHY DO I NEED COUNSELLING?

All of us, both men and women, experience difficulties in our lives. Some experiences are too hard to deal with on your own. Maybe you can't talk to family or friends, or there is a limit to the help they can give. Clients say that they appreciate a safe space that is private and confidential and just for them.

"My counsellor listens to what I have to say. I can talk, cry, be angry, not talk if I don't feel like it. It became a place that I could be myself."

Client Statement

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

We are fortunate to be able to offer a FREE service, however counsellors are paid. We get most of our funding from the HSE, donations and from fundraising.

DO YOU NEED TO BOOK AN APPOINTMENT BEFORE YOU GO IN?

No, you can just call in but it may be better to make an appointment just in case all counsellors are busy.

COULD YOU JUST TALK TO SOMEONE ON THE PHONE AND NOT GO IN TO THE CENTRE?

Yes. Some people don't want to come in especially in the early stages. Other people may not be able to come due to transport or childcare or whatever

DO YOU HAVE TO REPORT TO THE GARDAÍ?

It is the client's choice to report to the Gardaí or not. The counsellor will support them whatever they decide. It is very important for some people and for others it is something that they do not want to do.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED AS CHILDREN?

Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre offer support and counselling to male and female survivors of all types of sexual violence both recent and past.

"It was very informative, it really put all the facts, info and taboos, that are not normally talked about, out there." **S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment**

TELEPHONE HELPLINES

Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre
email: krcc@eircom.net web: www.krsac.com

tel: 1800 633 333

Limerick Rape Crisis Centre

tel: 1800 311 511

Sexual Violence Centre, Cork

tel: 1800 496 496

Childline
web: www.childline.ie

tel: 1800 666 666

Youth Health Service
email: yhs@hse.ie

tel: (021) 4220490

Sexual Health Centre, Cork
web: www.sexualhealthcare.com

tel: (021) 4276676

Bodywhys (Anorexia / Bulimia)

tel: 1890 200 444

Samaritans
web: www.samaritans.org

tel: (066) 712 2566

Aware (Depression)

tel: 1850 60 90 90

Grow (Mental Illness)

tel: (066) 712 5989

Schizophrenia Ireland

tel: 1890 621 631

Drug Problems

tel: 1800 295 295

Cluaiscint (Suicide)

tel: (066) 712 5932

TELEPHONE HELPLINES

Kerry Adolescent Counselling

tel: (066) 7181333

Victim Support

tel: 1850 661 771

Positive Options (Crisis Pregnancy)

Freetext List to: 50444

Cura (pregnancy)

tel: 1850 622 626 (066) 712 7355

Irish Cancer Society

tel: 1800 200 700

Teentext

Text "TEEN" to: 50101

Teenline Ireland

tel: 1800 833 634

Suicide Helpline

tel: 1800 742 745

Cuan Counselling, An Daingean
Free, confidential advice for young people

tel: 085 749 5054

"S.A.Y.I.T. provided a safe environment for these issues to be discussed openly."

S.A.Y.I.T. Participant Comment

Kerry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

5 Greenview Terrace, Tralee, Co Kerry.

email: krcc@eircom.net

freephone: 1800 633 333

Kerry Adolescent Counselling Service

Balloonagh, Tralee Co. Kerry

email: kfrcs@eircom.net

tel: 066 718 1333

Kerry Counselling Centre

17D Edward Court, Edward Street,

Tralee, Co. Kerry

tel: 066 712 2931

Southwest Counselling Service

Emmett Road, Killarney, Co Kerry

email: kcentre@eircom.net

tel: 064 36416

Positive Options Crisis Pregnancy Counselling is offered by:

Kerry Counselling Centre and Southwest Counselling Service

freetext list to: 50444

Information and support is offered by:

Tralee Family Planning and Women's Health Clinic

29 Ashe Street, Tralee, Co. Kerry

tel: 066 712 5322

"I'm so glad I made that call. I got help when I really needed it, I didn't feel so alone anymore." Client Statement

WEBSITES

www.spunout.ie

Award winning online health, lifestyle, supportive information for young people aged 16 - 25.

"Youth led and passionate about giving youth a voice"

www.headstrong.ie

"Our vision is that young people are heard, respected and supported as they journey into adulthood"

www.changeourminds.com

Website aimed at improving emotional health and reducing stress in older teenagers and adults.

www.stressandanxietyinteenagers.com

Aims to help young people by providing information on anxiety, and ways to combat stress and anxiety including self help techniques such as relaxation.

www.unicef.org.uk

Youth voice is UNICEF's youth website. Here you can learn about your rights and children's rights across the globe.

www.teenagehealthfreak.org

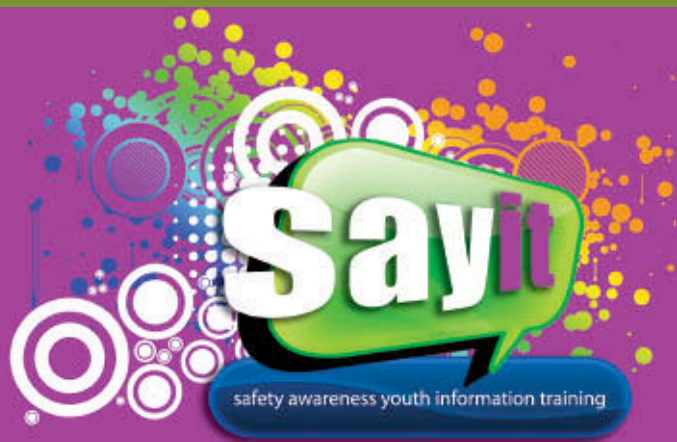
A website that provides information to young people on bullying, body changes, alcohol, drugs, mood and sex. You can also send an email via the website if you have particular problems that you want help with.

www.youngminds.org.uk

This website offers information to young people about emotional well-being.

www.teenline.ie

If you are feeling fed-up, alone, distressed, worried, or just want to talk.



KERRY RAPE & SEXUAL ABUSE CENTRE

:: 5 Greenview Terrace
:: Tralee :: Co. Kerry

web :: www.krsac.ie

email :: krcc@eircom.net

freephone :: 1800 633 333