Date Rape Survivor's Guide

what to do if it happens to you

by Erin Little

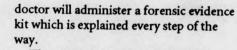
On a typical pub night at an Ontario University, Stefanie (not her real name) was at a popular campus bar with her friends. Kevin (not his real name), an old friend from high school was also there. After last call the party continued at Stefanie's house. Kevin and Stefanie started making out on her bed.

"I asked him to stop but he pinned me down," she remembers. Her shouts for help could not be heard above the music. Kevin raped Stefanie.

"When he left he said 'I'll call you tomorrow.' I couldn't believe it." counselling as well as continuing one-onone help. They offer general legal advice and refer survivors to the Metropolitan Toronto Sexual Assault Squad for more extensive information. The Crisis Centre will also make a third-party report to the police so the woman can remain anonymous, and counsellors will accompany women to the hospital or court if they need further support. Free self-defense courses are also offered through the crisis centre.

The centre offers telephone crisis

"The counsellor at the Crisis Centre was very helpful," says Stefanie. "She accepted my feelings of guilt and self-blame and



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The survivor has control over the situation: she chooses whether or not to contact police and have the forensic test administered. Staff members are nonjudgemental and supportive. Counsellors will follow up with a phone call and will offer ongoing individual or group counselling, which is covered by OHIP. Every case is confidential — the staff will not discuss any case with defense lawyers.

The Centre also counsels male survivors of sexual assault. Survivors who are going to court are referred to Sue Physic at the Victim Assistance Program in Scarborough.

Not an easy process

Court proceedings are often intimidating to survivors of rape. The Victim Assistance Program offers victims support during the court proceedings. Sue Physick and her assistant give victims general information about court, prepare them for testifying and familiarize them with the courtroom and proceedings. They offer accompaniment to court and are always present when

the victim is with the Crown Attorney.

Physick also tries to offer emotional support and reassurance.

"It is not an easy process," she says. "I believe in telling their story and that in being believed, healing takes place. If I didn't believe that, I couldn't do this work."

Assault victims can set up their own appointments at the Victim Witness Assistance program if they haven't been to the police.

"The choice is with the woman," Physick says. If she wants to press charges, she will be matched up with an officer whom Physick knows will be sensitive. Some women who have been through the Victim Assistance Program say that testifying gives

them a sense of control.

Silence makes it worse

Students at York who have been assaulted can contact Dale Hall at the Sexual Harassment Education and Complaint Centre. Survivors will receive crisis counselling and will be referred to therapists who are covered by OHIP. For legal advice, survivors will be referred to Community Legal Aid Students Program at Osgoode Hall law school or the Sexual Assault Squad. For more information drop by SHEACC at 108 Central Square.

Who to Call

• Toronto Rape Crisis Centre 597-8808

• Women's College Hospital Sexual Assault Care Centre 323-6040

 Scarborough Hospital Sexual Assault Care Centre 495-2555

• Victim/Witness Assistance Program 757-2886

• The Assaulted Women's Help-Line 863-0511

• York Sexual Harassment Complaint Centre 736-5500

 York Community Legal Aid Service Program 736-5029

 Sexual Assault Squad 324-6060 Many women who are raped do not know who to turn to.

In cases like Stefanie's, mutual friends don't want to get involved.

"Kevin told everyone that I was a slut," she says. "I quickly learned who my true friends were"

In date rape cases, often the biggest issue is that of trust. "Kevin violated my

trust. I doubted my own ability to judge people and build trusting relationships," Stefanie says.

Denial and self-blame also play a large role in a survivor's emotional state, and often it takes talking to an outsider to see rape for what it is.

"At first I didn't realize I was raped, and when my sister told me I had been, I blamed myself."

Non-biased support

Women like Stefanie need to know where to go to get information and support.



helped me get past them. I didn't worry about hurting her with my story like I did with my family. She was totally nonbiased."

Women's College Hospital in Toronto has a Sexual Assault Care Centre which offers 24-hour emergency service. The office and examination room are warm and welcoming, separate from the rest of emergency.

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The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre is a good place to start. The counsellors are extensively trained to help women who have been assaulted.

The crisis counsellors help women to regain control of their lives and to deal with their depression and anger. Women are brought in with police or can go on their own. They receive crisis counselling and are given a physical exam. If a woman is going to press charges, the

Not a rare occurrence

As many as one seven women students have been raped, according to one of the few studies on the subject. 84 per cent of these women knew their attacker, according to a 1985 survey of 6159 US students conducted by Mary Kass for *Ms. Magazine* (Canadian statistics are not available). 73 per cent of the women whose assaults conformed to the legal definition of rape did not think they were raped; 84 per cent of men did not consider themselves rapists. These are only the reported cases, the real numbers are unknown. There are many other support services available to women who have survived date rape (see "who to call" on this page).

"The most important part of my healing was support from my family and friends — knowing that they loved me and didn't blame me," Stefanie says. "Having someone non-biased to talk to was also fundamental in my recovery. I still think about it sometimes but I've regained my selfconfidence and I feel attractive again.

"I can't stress enough the importance of talking about it. Silence only makes it worse."