

1. **Myth:** Only females are victims of sexual assault.

**Truth:** Both men and women can be victims of sexual assault. One in five women and one in sixteen men will be victims of sexual assault during their college careers.

2. **Myth:** Real victims of sexual assault report their assault immediately to law enforcement.

**Truth:** Approximately ninety-five percent of assaults will go unreported. Some survivors wait weeks, months or even years before reporting their assaults, and some survivors never report. Assaults are not reported for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include: the survivor was intoxicated, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and may or may not remember the assault; the survivor feels too ashamed or embarrassed; the survivor blames her/himself; the survivor fears retaliation; or the survivor is concerned about not having proof that the assault happened.

3. **Myth:** The majority of reported assaults are false.

**Truth:** The majority of reported assaults are true. Studies indicate that between two percent and eight percent of reported assaults are false, the same percentage as other felonies.

4. **Myth:** The survivor invites sexual violence by his/her actions, dress and/or behaviors.

**Truth:** Sexual assault is NEVER the survivor's fault. No one seeks to be raped or sexually assaulted regardless of their level of intoxication or how they are dressed. Sexual assault is about power and control on the part of the perpetrator. Sexual assault is a violent criminal attack on an individual, NOT a spontaneous act of sexual passion. For the survivor, it is a humiliating and degrading act.

5. **Myth:** Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers. If the two people knew each other, it is not sexual assault.

**Truth:** Most sexual assaults are committed by someone that the survivor knows. Approximately ninety percent of survivors know their perpetrator and often identify him/her as their significant other, classmate, friend, acquaintance or co-worker. Even if two people know each other, if there is no consent to the sexual act, then a sexual assault has been committed.

6. **Myth:** After being assaulted, a survivor will remember every detail of their assault.

**Truth:** Every survivor is different, and every survivor's brain is going to react differently. Some survivors may remember their assault in exact detail; however, this is not true for many survivors. When an individual goes through a traumatic event, such as a sexual assault, their brain releases three chemicals - catecholamines, opiates and corticosteroids - which affect the way a memory is formed. Due to these chemicals, the survivor often has a fragmented memory of the assault. While recounting the assault, details of the assault will come back at different times and often not in chronological order.

7. **Myth:** It is only rape if the person fights back.

**Truth:** Many states do not require the survivor to resist in order to charge the offender with rape or sexual assault. In fact, many survivors experience what is called tonic immobility. Tonic immobility is an automatic response caused by the chemical corticosteroid. Corticosteroid is released at high levels during an assault, essentially triggering the body to shut down. Tonic immobility is characterized by muscular paralysis, increased breathing and eye closure. A survivor experiencing tonic immobility cannot move and is paralyzed by fear. Research suggests that between twelve and fifty percent of survivors experience tonic immobility during a sexual assault; however, most data suggests that the rate is actually closer to fifty percent than twelve percent. Many survivors will blame themselves or feel guilty because they did not "fight back" or "froze" during their attack, and many other people also blame them for doing so. However, it is important to remember that these are physical responses that are instantaneous and natural responses to an outside threat.

8. **Myth:** Sexual assault is just a miscommunication or mistake.

**Truth:** Sexual assault is a crime, not simply a mistake or miscommunication between two people. Sexual assault is any non-consensual sexual contact.

9. **Myth:** When women say no, they really mean yes.

**Truth:** Remember yes means yes! When an individual says yes, he/she is consenting to sexual activity. Silence does not equal consent. The person initiating or escalating sexual activity must gain consent at each and every level. It is okay to ask for clarification if you are unsure of what your partner is asking of you.

10. **Myth:** Once someone says yes they cannot change their mind.

**Truth:** Consent can be withdrawn at any time during a sexual encounter. If consent is withdrawn, then all sexual activity must stop immediately. Any sexual activity that occurs after consent is withdrawn is considered sexual assault. The survivor is under no obligation to continue sexual activity that he/she does not wish to participate in even if he/she initially consented.