

# ACQUAINTANCE AND DATE RAPE: MYTHS AND REALITIES

Acquaintance or date rape is defined as being forced into sexual activity by someone you know: a boyfriend, study partner, classmate, neighbor, etc.

The force involved ranges from intimidation, verbal and non-verbal threats, and use of physical force to threats of injury or use of weapons. 70 to 85% of all rapes are committed by someone who knows their victim. Often, neither person defines the incident as rape. The man may believe that, even though he used force, sex was desired by the woman. He may believe that he was justified in using force because he believed her to be a tease or flirt. The woman may believe that rape involves only strangers.

**MYTH:** If a woman teases or flirts with a man, or if she agrees to go to his home or ride in his car, she deserves to be raped.

**REALITY:** Male or female, no one deserves to be raped. There is no justification for rape.

**MYTH:** A woman who didn't fight back wasn't raped.

**REALITY:** Whether you fight back or not, forced sex is rape.

**MYTH:** When a woman says "no" to sex, she really means "yes". It's up to the man to seduce her and convince her that she wants to have sex.

**REALITY:** When a woman says "no", she means "no". A woman's refusal to have sex is just that, a refusal.

**MYTH:** Fondling or petting with a man means that a woman has agreed to have sex with him.

**REALITY:** Everyone has the right to say "no" to sex and have their decision respected, regardless of any foreplay or body signals which have occurred.

**MYTH:** Once men become sexually aroused, they cannot control their actions. Once a man becomes sexually aroused, he must have sex or he will be in pain.

**REALITY:** Men are very much in control of their actions, even when sexually aroused. Physically, men do not need to have sex after becoming sexually aroused (although they may try to tell you they do).

**MYTH:** Women often lie about being raped, especially if they have regrets about sex with a boyfriend or date, or if they want to get revenge.

**REALITY:** False reports of rape are rare. Disclosing a sexual assault often times means that a woman risks her reputation and may encounter ridicule, and disbelief from others. She does not say that she was raped because she has a motive of revenge or has regrets.

## WHY DO MEN RAPE WOMEN THEY KNOW?

The most common reason is that many men believe in rape-supportive myths such as those shown above. They were raised to believe that women are sexual adversaries who are to be "conquered". Men who rape view women as sexual beings first, human beings second. Men who rape an acquaintance or date are insensitive to others' rights, desires, and feelings. They usually see sexual promiscuity as a goal or as a personal achievement. In many ways, our society teaches men that these values or attitudes are acceptable; therefore, the rape is condoned and accepted by society. To change the occurrence of rape, we must change the acceptance and promotion of these values, beliefs, and myths.