

# Survivor's Reaction

**R**ecognizing a rape victim's emotional state can help you to be more understanding.

*Emotional shock:* I feel so numb. Why am I so calm? Why can't I cry?

*Disbelief:* Did it really happen? Why me?

*Embarrassment:* What will people think? No. I can't tell my family.

*Shame:* I feel so dirty, like there is something wrong with me now. I want to wash my hands all day long.

*Guilt:* I feel as if I did something to make this happen. If only I had...

*Depression:* How am I going to go on? I feel so tired and hopeless.

*Powerlessness:* Will I ever feel in control again?

*Disorientation:* I can't sit still. I'm having trouble getting through the day. I'm just overwhelmed.

*Retriggering:* I keep having flashbacks. I wish they would stop.

*Denial:* Wasn't it "just" a rape?

*Fear:* I'm afraid of so many things. Will I get pregnant or get VD? Am I safe? Can people tell what's happened to me? Will I ever want to be intimate again? Will I ever get over this? I'm afraid I'm going crazy.

*Anxiety:* I'm a nervous wreck! I have trouble breathing. (Anxiety is often expressed in physical symptoms, like difficulty breathing or muscle tension, sleep disturbances, change in eating habits, nausea, stomach problems, nightmares, bedwetting.)

*Anger:* I want to KILL him!

--Reprinted from *Surviving Sexual Assault*, edited by Rochel Grossman.