



# When a man is raped

A survival guide

Information  
for men who  
have been  
raped,  
parents,  
partners,  
spouses  
and  
friends



# Acknowledgments

This booklet could not have been undertaken without the courage of men who were willing to talk about their assaults. Same-sex male rape has for too long been kept a 'dark secret' by the social pressures that prevent men from talking about their experience of sexual violence. I thank the courageous rape survivors who allowed me to talk with them about difficult and painful issues, and who trusted me with their words and experiences.

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*Margret Roberts*

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## About this booklet

If you are reading this booklet, you may be seeking information for yourself following a rape. Or, it might mean that a man close to you has been raped and you wish to understand what has happened to him and how you can help him deal with the aftermath of the crime.

The booklet is designed to aid in the understanding about the rape of men, what professional support services are available and what they do, and what might happen if the rapist is prosecuted.

### **If you are a man who has been raped**

*When a man is raped: a survival guide* provides facts about the rape of men, and the effects of male rape, to help you better understand the nature of this type of sexual assault and the likely effects on you. If you have been raped, the booklet will help empower you to deal with the trauma and complement information provided to you by professionals helping you after a sexual assault. In particular *Part 1* provides factual information for victims and describes a man's normal reactions to a rape.

### **If you know a man who has been raped**

If someone close to you has been raped, this booklet is also designed to help you. It will help you understand what has happened and assist you to communicate with the man who has been raped. *Part 2* is aimed at providing information to help you to assist him.

All sections will be useful to the survivor and to those close to him.

## Terms used

In this booklet we have generally used the easy to understand term *rape* to describe the sexual assault of male victims. We use the term *male rape* in reference to the act of an adult male raping an adult male. However it should be remembered that rape specifically describes forced sexual intercourse, but that the general term *sexual assault* is also used to cover rape as well as other forms of assault of a sexual nature. In legal terms, sexual assault is any sexual contact that is against a person's will or without consent. This includes situations where force, violence or weapons are used as well as situations where the victim is too intoxicated or scared to give consent. Sexual assault against men happens in lots of different ways. If you have been indecently assaulted or survived an attempted rape, then this booklet will be of use to you as you will probably share many of the issues, thoughts and feelings, as a man who has been raped.

If you were sexually assaulted as a child, again many of the issues raised in *When a man is raped: a survival guide* could help validate your experiences. Another booklet written specifically for men who were sexually assaulted as children, "*Who can a man tell?*" is highly recommended. (Education Centre Against Violence, 2000)

When referring to those people who have experienced sexual violence we choose to use the word *survivor*. This term carries a measure of strength, perseverance, and empowerment, and reminds men who have been raped that they did survive the assault. We sometimes use the term *victim* to emphasise that the man who has been raped is the victim of a serious crime of sexual assault.



# Introduction

When we hear the word “rape”, our mental image is usually that of a male perpetrator and a female victim. But men do get raped. Just as several decades ago, the rape of women and children was neglected and collectively denied, so also has the rape of men. Few people realise how frequently the rape of men occurs, and even fewer know how to respond in a way that respectfully helps the victim.

While some people might acknowledge that some men are raped in prison, most do not think the sexual violation of adult males occurs in the broader community. It is surprising to note therefore that men make up 10 to 15% of all adult sexual assault victims. However this is probably an underestimate as men usually do not report their assaults to authorities.<sup>1</sup> One study involving more than 3000 adults in America found that 10% of males had been raped during their adult years.<sup>2</sup> Another US study of college students found that 16% of men had been forced against their will to have sex at some point in their adult lives.<sup>3</sup>

When men are raped, the person who usually assaults them is another man. It is possible for women to rape men, although this crime is much less frequent and has been documented and researched to an even lesser extent than same-sex rape.

In spite of these figures, very little research has been conducted on the sexual assault of men and some counselling services lack the knowledge and skills to adequately assist male survivors of sexual violence. Unfortunately male survivors of rape have often struggled alone trying to deal with their trauma in isolation. More often than not, they are silenced by the fear that loved ones, police and service providers will fail to support them in their time of crisis.

The aim of this booklet is to encourage those men who have been raped to seek help and to provide information to them, their families, partners and friends who will help them deal with the trauma of rape.



# Part One

## *For Male Survivors of Rape*

### **What we know about the rape of men**

Current statistics indicate that of all the victims of adult sexual assault that report to the police in New South Wales, 17% are men, and 50% of them are aged between 16 and 24 years (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2002). Additionally, one in four NSW male prison inmates under the age of 25 years have been raped while in prison, <sup>4</sup> although few of them report the assault to prison authorities.

**Of all men who are raped, most (90 to 95%) do not report the crime.<sup>5</sup>**

There are many reasons that men do not report having been raped or seek help for themselves. It has been found that immediately after the assault, most male rape victims deny to themselves and to others that the assault has happened.<sup>6</sup> This is because they fear the stigma of being thought of as "weak" or fear that others will accuse them of having permitted the rape.

Many male survivors find it difficult to name their experience as rape because society teaches us that men can not be victims of sexual assault.<sup>7</sup> Some victims view their rape as just a physical assault and while they might seek assistance for physical injuries, they usually do not seek counselling to help manage the emotional after effects of the rape. Also for male victims, fear of having their sexual identity questioned often prevents them from reporting their assault.<sup>8</sup>

Gay men who have been raped face particular issues. Many believe they are already stigmatised by societal stereotypes

of "sexual deviance". When they have been raped they often try to make sense of the rape by calling it a "bad sexual experience" and blame themselves for getting into the situation, especially if they were raped by someone they knew. For example, a gay man who was raped rationalised the assault by saying, "*these things happen all the time in gay life...that's what you get for taking chances...I should have known better*".<sup>9</sup> Fear of hostility and moral judgement from police, health services and counsellors, may also prevent gay men from seeking assistance from mainstream support systems.

The intense stigma of same-sex rape is enough to prevent most survivors from obtaining the services they need unless physical injuries severely compromise the survivor's life or ability to hide the assault from others.

In Australia, as in most countries, the reluctance of men to report that they have been victims of these crimes (including rapes in prison) means that we do not know the true frequency of male rape.

### **If you are a rape survivor**

#### **You are not alone**

Male rape happens more often than most people believe. Remember that you are not alone in your experience. Anyone regardless of gender, race, age, sexual orientation or physical strength can be raped anywhere, anytime.

#### **You did not cause the rape to happen**

You are the victim of a crime. You did not ask to be raped. You did not cause it to happen. Nothing about a man and nothing he wears, does, or says makes him deserving of sexual assault. Although it is common for many men to blame themselves, *it is not your fault*.



## You did the right thing to survive the assault

The threat of violence was real and your fear was real. Whatever you did meant that you got out of that situation alive. It is evidence of your ability to survive a threat to your life.

### Facts

#### About the rape of men

Some men are assaulted by strangers, however in most cases of assault of a male, the victim knows the assailant, with a friend or acquaintance being the most likely offender. Gay men are sometimes assaulted as part of a gay bashing, and indigenous men are also at a higher risk for sexual victimization, because sexual assault can occur as a part of a hate crime. It is not uncommon for there to be more than one offender.

Sexual assaults frequently involve threats of violence or death. Weapons may be used to intensify the threat. Fear is an important weapon used against victims in a crime of violence. Men who have an earlier experience of sexual assault, perhaps in their childhood, often say that they “froze with fear” when the assault started. They say that the situation suddenly reminded them of how they felt when they were young boys.

Drugs can also be used to increase the vulnerability of a man to a sexual assault.

So whatever the details of the assault, when this crime is committed the victim is usually powerless and has to do what the offender or offenders want.

## About the offenders

Perpetrators of male-to-male rape have an average age of 26 years. They commonly identify as heterosexual and are usually involved in consensual sexual relationships with others.<sup>10</sup>

Many men who rape men state that the gender of the victim does not matter to them. They rape to:

- conquer and control
- act out feelings of revenge
- resolve conflicts about their own sexuality
- gain status among similar men by being an aggressor.<sup>10</sup>

## Common reactions men experience after rape

Whether you're a man or a woman, sexual assault is a trauma. The trauma of sexual assault involves losing control of your own body and possibly fearing death or injury. There are certain ways that human beings react to trauma that are the same for men and women. *Rape trauma syndrome* is a term that health professionals use to describe the common reactions that occur for both men and women after sexual assault. It is not an illness or abnormal reaction - it is a *normal* response to an abnormal, traumatic event. What many rape survivors experience is the same as *shellshock*. This was experienced by front line soldiers in World War 1 and is now called *post traumatic stress*.

Below is a checklist of common reactions to sexual assault. Though each person and situation is unique, the checklist below will help you to know the range of reactions that are normal to expect. Of course, there are also differences in the way that men experience sexual assault compared to



women. Following the list of universal reactions to sexual assault, we'll delve into some of the reactions to sexual assault that are more unique to men.

### Checklist of Universal Reactions to Sexual Assault

- **Emotional Shock:** I feel numb. How can I be so calm? Why can't I cry? Or get angry?
- **Disbelief and/or Denial:** Did it really happen? Why me? Maybe I just imagined it. It wasn't really rape.
- **Embarrassment:** What will people think? I can't tell my family or friends.
- **Shame:** I feel completely filthy, like there's something wrong with me. I can't get clean.
- **Guilt:** I feel as if it's my fault, or I should've been able to stop it. If only I had...
- **Depression:** How am I gonna get through the next few days? I'm so tired! I feel so hopeless. Maybe I'd be better off dead.
- **Powerlessness:** Will I ever feel in control again?
- **Disorientation:** I don't even know what day it is, or what I'm supposed to be doing right now. I keep forgetting things.
- **Flashbacks:** I'm still re-living the assault! I keep seeing that face and feeling like it's happening all over again.
- **Fear:** I'm scared of everything. What if I have herpes or AIDS? I can't sleep because I'll have nightmares. I'm afraid to go out. I'm afraid to be alone.
- **Anxiety:** I'm having panic attacks. I can't breathe! I can't stop shaking. I feel overwhelmed.

- **Anger:** I feel like killing the person who attacked me!
- **Physical Stress:** My stomach (or head or back) aches all the time. I feel jittery and don't feel like eating.
- **Remembering past assaults:** I'm getting back memories of what happened to me as a child, since the rape. They won't go away.

### Unique issues faced by male survivors of rape

There is great societal denial of the fact that men get raped. Chances are - except for the occasional bad prison joke - most of us don't ever hear about the topic of male sexual assault. The need to deny the existence of male sexual assault is partly rooted in the mistaken belief that men are immune to being victimized, that they should be able to fight off any attacker if they are a "real man". A closely related belief is that men can't be forced into sex- either they want it or they don't.

These mistaken beliefs allow lots of men to feel safe and invulnerable, and to think of sexual assault as something that only happens to women. Unfortunately, these beliefs can also increase the pain that is felt by a male survivor, and leave him feeling isolated, ashamed, and "less of a man".

No wonder so few men actually get help after being sexually assaulted. The fact is that only 5 to 20% of all victims of sexual assault actually report the crime - the percentage for male victims is even lower. Feelings of shame, confusion and self-blame leave many men suffering in silence after being sexually assaulted.

There are some unique problems and concerns that male survivors may experience. (*see next page*)



**For most men**, the idea of being a victim is very hard to handle. We're raised to believe that a man should be able to defend himself against all odds, or that he should be willing to risk his life or severe injury to protect his pride and self-respect. How many movies or TV shows have you seen in which the "manly" hero is prepared to fight a group of huge guys over an insult or name-calling? Surely, you're supposed to fight to the death over something like unwanted sexual advances...right? These beliefs about "manliness" and "masculinity" are deeply ingrained in most of us and can lead to intense feelings of guilt, shame and inadequacy for the male survivor of sexual assault.

Many male survivors may even question whether they deserved or somehow wanted to be sexually assaulted because, in their minds, they failed to defend themselves. Male survivors frequently see their assault as a loss of manhood and get disgusted with themselves for not "fighting back". These feelings are normal but the thoughts attached to them aren't necessarily true.

Remind yourself that you did what seemed best at the time to survive - there's nothing unmasculine about that. As a result of their guilt, shame and anger, some men punish themselves by getting into self-destructive behaviour after being raped. For lots of men, this means increased alcohol or drug use. For others, it means increased aggressiveness, like arguing with friends or co-workers or even picking fights with strangers. Many men pull back from relationships and wind up feeling more and more isolated. It's easy to see why male survivors of sexual assault are at increased risk for getting depressed, getting into trouble at work, getting physically hurt, or developing alcohol and drug problems.

Many male survivors also develop sexual difficulties after being sexually assaulted. It may be difficult to resume sexual relationships or start new ones because sexual contact may trigger flashbacks, memories of the assault, or just plain bad feelings. It can take time to get back to normal.

Michael Scarce describes one survivor who sought encounters with other men that replicated his own sexual victimization.<sup>12</sup> The man did not recall such episodes afterwards and only knew about them later because of pain and blood in the rectal area. "I ask myself why I do that and I'm not sure", he said. "I really feel like it's the only thing I'm good for, that I deserve it".

**For heterosexual men**, rape almost always causes some confusion or questioning about their sexuality. Since many people believe that only gay men are raped, a heterosexual survivor may begin to believe that he must be gay or that he will become gay. Furthermore, perpetrators often accuse their victims of enjoying the sexual assault, leading some survivors to question their own experiences.

The confusion about sexuality may occur especially if the victim has an erection or ejaculates during the rape. The victim may be left thinking "does this mean I really enjoyed it?" Having an erection and ejaculating are the body's automatic response to sexual stimulation and these responses can occur even when the sexual stimulation is not wanted or not enjoyable. Experiencing sexual arousal as a result of rape shows nothing about a person's sexuality and does not mean that he liked it.

Being sexually assaulted has *nothing* to do with sexual orientation, past, present or future. People do not "*become gay*" as a result of being sexually assaulted.



**For gay men**, sexual assault can lead to feelings of self-blame and self-loathing attached to their sexuality. There is already enough homophobic sentiment in society to make many gay men suffer from internal conflicts about their sexuality. Being sexually assaulted may lead a gay man to believe he somehow “deserved it”, that he was “paying the price” for his sexual orientation. Unfortunately, this self-blame can be reinforced by the ignorance or intolerance of others who blame the victim by suggesting that a gay victim somehow provoked the assault or was less harmed by it because he was gay.

For other gay men, accusing acquaintances of being rapists is akin to airing the gay community’s “dirty linen” to the broader public, so they choose to hide their experiences. Myers reports that a gay psychiatrist who sees numerous sexual assault survivors, labels acquaintance rape in the gay world as “our dirty secret”.<sup>11</sup>

Gay male victims are silenced for fear their sexual identity will be made public, thus reducing the likelihood that they will receive help.

Gay men may also hesitate to report a sexual assault due to fears of blame, disbelief or intolerance by police or medical personnel. As a result gay men may be deprived of legal protections and necessary medical care following an assault.

Gay survivors say they are frightened that memories of the rape will invade their other relationships.

Some sexual assaults of men are actually forms of gay bashing, motivated by fear and hatred of homosexuality. In these cases, perpetrators may verbally abuse their victims and imply that the victim deserved to be sexually assaulted.

It's important to remember that sexual assault is an act of violence, power and control and that no one deserves it.

**For transgendered people**, sexual assault can lead to the person feeling doubly stigmatised, by the rape and by community attitudes. However, transgendered people, like all other members of the community, have a right to access sexual assault services and be treated with respect and dignity. In fact it is illegal to discriminate against transgendered or gay people who are victims of a crime.

**For male sex workers**, there can also be feelings of being stigmatised because of the nature of their work, and they may fear that their experiences will not be taken seriously. Rape is not part of sex work - it is a crime.

**For men with a disability**, as with all men who have been raped, the man will think that the rape was his fault, that it was something about him that caused the rape. Also like other men who have been raped, they will look to themselves for a reason to explain the rape. Unfortunately, because their disability may increase their vulnerability to an assault, the man and sometimes others will tend to look to the disability to explain the assault. However the same must be said for men with a disability as for men who are not disabled. It is never the fault of the victim, it is the assailant who has chosen to abuse his power and carry out a violent crime against another person. It does not matter who the victim is, the rapist is always to blame.

For disabled men the most important part of the recovery process is the same as it is for men who do not have a disability. It is re-establishing safety for himself. A disabled man can use the skills he has learned to deal with his



disability to assist himself through this crisis. Trust will also be an issue, as it is for other rape survivors. For disabled men problems can arise if the person who has raped them was in a carer's role. A rape in this context is a particular betrayal of trust. At this time it is important that he use those around him that have proved worthy of his trust to assist him in his recovery rather than retreating into isolation and loneliness.

Depending on the nature of the man's disability, there may be specific issues he needs to address in his process of recovery.

Although recognising the particular challenges for disabled men that have been raped, they have much in common with men who do not have a disability who have been raped. The priorities are safety, not blaming himself and using those around him that he trusts to help him through the crisis.

### **What can you do after the rape**

#### **Where to get help**

Agencies that can provide assistance after a man has been raped include:

- hospitals
- sexual assault counselling services
- police
- sexual health services

## **NSW Health Department Sexual Assault Services provide:**

- Counselling - immediately after an assault and in the following months
- Forensic examinations (to gather evidence for use in a prosecution)
- Information on how to report the sexual assault to the police
- Information on choices and rights in the legal system
- Referral to a sexual health service
- Support and assistance with issues you may have about safety
- Support and information for partners, friends and family
- Court preparation and court support
- Information about victims compensation (if the assault occurred in NSW)

*(Specific contact details are given in Part 3 of this booklet.)*

### **What you need to know**

After a sexual assault you will need to know about:

- How to ensure your safety
- Medical care
- Making a report to the police
- How counselling might help
- Financial assistance
- Victim's rights
- Making a complaint if something goes wrong



## The importance of safety

Given the trauma you have experienced, it is really important that you take care of your self, feel safe, and have support available. Aim to get back the feeling of safety that you used to have.

You may already have ways of coping that work for you. Here are some suggestions that may add to your own ideas:

- *Find support from people who are important to you*, and try not to isolate yourself. Choose people you know who are likely to support you in feeling safe. Think about how each of these people can help you with protection, and those who can continue to assist you to feel safe. They must be able to help you feel safe, not only by providing the protection, emotional support and practical assistance that you need, but also by not belittling, patronising or demeaning you. And don't let them blame you for what happened. If you need to, remind them that it was not your fault, you did not ask for this.
- *Talk it through with someone you trust*. Rely on your own judgement about how people are relating to you. If they are not being as supportive or caring as you might expect from your previous relationship with them or if they are acting in a negative way toward you, you may choose to tell them this, so that they can realise that your expectations of assistance are real. Your friends, family and partner may not know how best to help you, to act or behave in response to what you tell them about the sexual assault. After all, not many people know much about male rape. Your friends and family may need to get more information about sexual assault before they can start to understand about what has happened to you. They may

be frightened that the experience has changed you in such a way that they will have difficulty relating to you. (*For guidance on how to assist a person close to you that has been raped, see Part 2 of this booklet.*) If you find your emotional response to the rape is particularly strong or persistent and is overwhelming, a trained sexual assault counsellor may help you get things back under your control.

*Try these:*

- Find a place where you can feel safe and at peace
- Keep a diary of your thoughts and feelings
- Get plenty of rest, even if you find this difficult
- Make time for relaxation
- Get regular exercise such as walking
- Try to eat regular meals
- Keep doing what you enjoy
- Be informed before making decisions
- Blame the attacker and not yourself
- Remind yourself that things will get better
- Focus on surviving

### Legal assistance with safety

There are several legal options that can help provide you with protection from the offender:

- *Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)*: You, or the police on your behalf, can apply for an AVO to keep the offender away from you. An AVO is a court order, which stops a person from doing certain things, like ringing you up, or



coming around to your workplace or house. Even if you decide not to report the sexual assault to the police, you can still apply for an AVO.

- *Make a formal complaint to the police:* It is totally your decision whether or not to report the assault to the police. If you do report it to the police and the offender(s) is charged, the police can request special bail conditions be put on the person. The police will explain to you the protection this gives.

## Medical care

Many men who have been raped have concerns about their health following the assault. For assistance you may attend a hospital or your local doctor. If you choose to go to a hospital, you can request to be seen by a sexual assault counsellor. If you wish, the counsellor will arrange for you to be seen by a doctor who is experienced in helping people who have been sexually assaulted.

Common health concerns that you could discuss with the doctor are:

### 1. Injuries

Bruising and scratches are common following sexual assault. The doctor can check the injuries and advise you about treatment and the length of time they will take to heal.

It is less common to have serious injuries. However if you have suffered physical as well as sexual assault, if you have been hit on the head, and if you have significant pain anywhere, it is really important to have the injuries checked by a doctor.

## 2. Sexually transmitted infections

The chance of getting a sexually transmitted infection, including HIV/AIDS, from a sexual assault is generally thought to be low. Medications are available which may protect against some sexually transmitted infections, including hepatitis B. You can discuss these medications with the doctor, and decide if you both think there is a reason for them to be prescribed.

*Remember!* If you were exposed to any of the assailant's bodily fluids there is a small chance that you have a sexually transmitted infection. Therefore it is important to practice safe sex until a doctor gives you the "all clear".

## 3. Other health concerns

You may wish to talk to a doctor about other health concerns such as sleeping difficulties, eating problems, feeling sick, aches and pains and difficulties going to the toilet. You may also ask for a certificate if you need to take time off work to help your recovery.

### Medical examinations

Following sexual assaults, medical examinations are performed for two quite different reasons:

- to check on your health and any injuries sustained which need treatment (health examination)
- to collect evidence (a forensic medical examination)

### The health examination

The health examination can be performed at any time, but is often performed at the same time as the forensic examination (see below). The health examination is to



identify injuries that need treatment. The doctor will discuss with you the risks of acquiring sexually transmitted infections and whether preventive treatments may be appropriate for you. The doctor will also provide information about follow up care of any injuries and a referral for follow up testing for sexually transmitted infections.

### **The forensic examination**

This is a special type of examination that can only be performed by doctors trained in the collection of forensic evidence.

In larger hospitals, you might be able to choose the gender of the doctor that performs the forensic examination, if this is important to you. This may mean a delay, or you might have to come back later for the forensic examination. The delay could result in some evidence being lost.

Forensic examinations are best performed as soon as possible after the sexual assault (preferably immediately and within 72 hours of the assault), while the evidence (body fluids from the rapist, bruising and other marks on your body) may still be detectable.

Forensic examinations are conducted to collect supportive evidence that an assault occurred, should the case proceed to court. If you decide to report the sexual assault to the police, (and this is totally your decision), the examination provides evidence to support your case in court. The doctor that performs the forensic examination may be asked to go to court to give evidence. A forensic examination will only take place if you want it.

After giving your written permission for the forensic examination to proceed, the doctor will write down what you tell him/her about the assault. He/she will carefully record these details and any pain and other symptoms that you might have. It will help the doctor take the most appropriate forensic specimens if you tell about the things that the offender did to you.

The doctor will then conduct a thorough examination and collect evidence that may help with the criminal investigation. You do not have to be physically injured for the forensic examination to be useful.

Samples will only be taken with your consent and will focus on parts of your body that have had contact with the offender's body fluids. The examination may be stopped at any time if you are uncomfortable with proceeding.

Depending upon what happened in the sexual assault, the doctor may take samples of hair and pubic hair, fingernail scrapings and swabs from your anus, penis and mouth to look for semen and body fluids that could identify the offender through their DNA. The doctor will also take a blood sample from you and might keep some of the clothes you were wearing at the time of the assault for testing and for evidence.

The forensic evidence and the examining doctor's report will be handed over to the police only with your written permission and only after you decide to make a statement to the police so that an investigation can commence. This is your choice, and the counsellor and police can give you information to help you make this decision.

It can sometimes be difficult to face a forensic examination. Remember that at the hospital, the first person you will speak



to about the assault will be a trained counsellor. They are specially trained to speak with men and women who have been assaulted. They will answer your questions and support you to make your own decisions. It is their role to help make the medical examination less intimidating and they will stay with you the entire time you are at the hospital.

### **Follow up medical care**

Depending upon the nature of the assault or your injuries you may need follow up appointments for tests or treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

As sexually transmitted infections may take several weeks to show up, it is important that you follow the doctor's recommendations for further health examinations and testing. You can have the confidential examinations and tests at some sexual assault services, your local sexual health clinic (where they are free), or through your own GP.

The first follow up appointment is usually offered two to three weeks after the assault. At the appointment the doctor can check that injuries have healed, take swabs, blood and a urine sample to check for some sexually transmitted infections, and provide you with the opportunity to talk about health concerns such as poor sleep or problems with eating.

Further follow-up appointments are usually offered about six weeks and three months after the assault. The doctor will check with you about your recovery and can offer further blood tests for HIV, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Of course it is advisable to consult a doctor immediately if you develop any illnesses or new symptoms following a sexual assault. Early identification of a medical problem will often make treatment easier.

## Deciding whether to report the rape to police

*It is entirely your decision whether to report the sexual assault to the police.* Some men who have been raped decide immediately that reporting the assault to police is an important part of their recovery. They want the offender legally held accountable for his actions. For other victims, reporting to police is not important to their recovery. They may decide that it is too difficult to deal with the extra stress of talking to the police and possibly going through the court process.

Many men need a little time to make this important decision of reporting the assault. If you do need some time to think this decision through, it is possible to go ahead and have a forensic examination and ask the Sexual Assault Service to place the evidence in secure storage for a couple of days till you make up your mind. You will then need to come back to the hospital at a later date to sign the evidence over to the police.

As sexual assault is a serious crime the police will act once you have decided to go ahead and make a report to them. This is called “making a complaint”. If you report the assault to the police and then later decide not to go ahead with the matter, they will ask you to make a “retraction”. It is unlikely that the investigation will go ahead after you have made the retraction.

If the first thing you do after the assault is report it to the police they will usually ask you if you would like to speak with a sexual assault counsellor before they proceed with detailed questioning.

After you have spoken to the sexual assault counsellor at the hospital the police will then ask you to go to the police



station. Here they will go through a lot of questions about the details of the assault. The information you supply will be recorded in writing and called a 'statement'. Your statement will be taken by a detective and when it is finished you will be asked to read your statement, correct any errors and sign it. If you later recall further details, or wish to add to or alter the statement, this can be done by contacting the detectives assigned to the case. There are usually two detectives, called the Officer in Charge of the investigation (OIC) and the Second in Charge (2IC). Any questions or problems to do with the investigation should also be directed to these officers.

It is not uncommon for people to become upset as they tell the police about a sexual assault. It is a good idea to have a support person with you as you give your statement. If you need an interpreter, the police will arrange one. Remember you are voluntarily providing information to the police, not being investigated yourself.

Your completed statement will be produced as part of the evidence in any subsequent trial and you will be able to refer to your statement when you are giving evidence in court.

Once you tell the police what happened, they make a decision on whether to charge the offender and prepare a brief of evidence. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions decides if the matter will go to court. Their decision is based solely on legal technicalities and the amount of evidence available. A decision not to prosecute does not imply that you were not believed nor taken seriously by the police.

If your case proceeds to court, the two officers assigned to the case as well as your counsellor will provide information

from time to time about the progress of the case towards trial. If the case goes to trial, you will be able to bring family members, friends and/or your counsellor to the court to support you when you give evidence. This is providing that it is an open court. If you request a closed court then with permission from the court your support person can accompany you while you give evidence.

For more information about going to court and the legal process, contact the *Victims of Crime Bureau*, (See Part 3: *Where to get help*).

### **Does talking about rape help you get over it?**

Talking about the sexual assault and its effects on you with someone you trust can be helpful. Some victims want to talk about their sexual assault straight away whereas others may not feel ready to talk about it for months or years. Some people do not talk about it at all. Many people who decide to talk about their sexual assault initially tell a friend or family member. Others find that it is easier to talk about the assault to a counsellor first.

Think carefully about who you would feel safe telling and how much your friends and family are likely to be of help to you. Remember that some people although they might be close to you, may have attitudes and beliefs about sexual assault that are unhelpful or even harmful to your recovery.

Your friends and family might not know what to believe or how best to support you, as there are many myths about sexual assault. This is particularly true for male rape (See *Facts and Myths About the Rape of Men: page 37*). Some of these myths may interfere with their ability to provide support.



Trust in your own judgement about how people are relating to you and be prepared to seek help elsewhere if it is not working out. To provide the best support, family/friends/partners might need to get accurate information about sexual assault before they can start to understand what has happened to you. They may be frightened that the experience has changed you in such a way that they will have difficulty relating to you.

In addition, or as an alternative to getting support from friends/family, you can talk to a professional counsellor experienced in dealing with people who have been sexually assaulted.

### **What does a sexual assault counsellor do?**

Sexual assault counsellors provide accurate information about sexual assault and, in a supportive and non-blaming way, discuss with you such things as:

- feelings, issues, or difficulties you may be experiencing
- normal reactions to trauma
- help you to find ways to make life more like you want it to be
- supports and services for you and your family/friends
- things you can do to help yourself recover

Counselling can be on an individual basis or sometimes in a group situation with other people who have experienced sexual assault. Sexual Assault Services in New South Wales are free, but private counsellors charge a fee for service.

## When to seek help through counselling

In the days and weeks after a sexual assault, thoughts and emotions associated with the assault can feel all consuming, but most survivors find that gradually a sense of normalcy returns. From research, we know that the recovery process after being raped unfolds over time. Although most of the intense feelings from the assault will recede, it is common for rape survivors to experience difficulties near the anniversary of their assaults or in circumstances that trigger memories of the experience.

To feel emotionally affected after traumatic events is normal. However, if you are feeling overwhelmed or some of these feelings are persisting you should consider seeking professional counselling. Some men will even feel suicidal for a brief period after a rape. This is an obvious sign of being overwhelmed and indicates that the man needs to seek counselling support immediately.

Remember seeking help is confidential and does not mean that you have to report the assault to police. Many men also feel a pressure to be a “real man” and “tough it out” on their own. Feeling “feminised” after a rape can be a barrier for some men getting the help they deserve and have a right to receive.

### **You do not need to deal with this on your own!**

Some indications that you may need to seek help include:

- you are feeling overwhelmed by bad feelings that don't seem to be going away
- flashbacks are frequently intruding into your daily life
- you continue to feel anxious, stressed or exhausted



- relationships continue to be affected
- your work is suffering
- you find yourself increasing your alcohol consumption
- you are abusing other drugs
- nightmares or poor sleep continues to disturb you after three or four weeks
- you are confused about your options of what you can do about the rape

Remember, you do not need to have a 'problem' in order to see a counsellor. Rather you may wish to get the counsellor to help you manage the reactions commonly experienced by men who have been sexually assaulted. And of course you can have counselling soon after the assault or some time later depending upon your needs. Recovery, like grief, is a process and is not time limited.

### **Do I need to talk about actual details of the rape in counselling?**

If the rape has harmed your ability to trust people then you will first need to build trust with the counsellor and feel safe with him or her. Whether you discuss the actual details of the assault depends on what works for you. However most people find it helps their recovery to talk about what happened in a safe and confidential way with a trained counsellor. If you do not want to do this, the counsellor does not need to know all the details of the assault to be able to help. What is important is that you discuss how the rape is affecting you and what you would like to do to manage those issues. You and the counsellor together decide which things to focus on.

## Finding a counsellor

If you wish to seek professional counselling, it is important to find a counsellor that is right for you. For instance, depending on the way they work, some counsellors may suit you better than others. Some men prefer to see a female counsellor because they feel unable to trust men with their feelings because the perpetrator was a male. Others like to see a male counsellor because they are seeking a male's perspective. The choice of counsellor is about what is most helpful to you. Feel free to ask questions so that you are sure the counsellor understands the things you need to discuss. Trust in your own judgement and talk with them about how the sessions are going. If you start seeing a counsellor and things do not seem to be working out, discuss this with them and if necessary ask for referral to someone else.

## Use of Interpreters

If English is not your first language, it is your right to ask for an interpreter. If you feel you need an interpreter, talk to your counsellor, or the police.

Professional interpreters are bound by rules not to tell other people about what you say. The NSW Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW (CRC) provides interpreters and you do not have to pay.

Men with hearing or speech impairment or other disability that may make it difficult to communicate can also use interpreters. Ask your counsellor about this.

For men who are deaf, signing interpreters are available without charge and can assist in dealings with the police or attend medical or counselling sessions with you.



## Financial assistance

### Victims Compensation Tribunal

In NSW victims of sexual assault can claim financial compensation from the Victims Compensation Tribunal. Along with other people injured as the result of violent crime you can claim compensation for medical treatment, counselling, lost wages and suffering. You must make a formal statement to the police to be eligible for compensation. Your eligibility for compensation does not depend on the outcome of the court case against the offender. The Tribunal only has to believe that "on the balance of probabilities" you are a victim of sexual assault. (This is unlike the criminal case against the accused person where the offence has to be proven "beyond reasonable doubt").

### Claiming compensation

It is advisable to see a lawyer about your application. The Tribunal usually pays for the lawyer's costs, whether or not you are awarded compensation. You should apply to the Victims Compensation Tribunal within two years of the most recent sexual assault. If more than two years have passed, you must apply to the Tribunal for "leave to apply to lodge an application out of time".

If there is a court case against the offender, you do not have to wait until the case is finalised to make the application for compensation. However, it is often best to wait until the legal process is underway. If the case does go to court, the Tribunal will wait until the result before making a decision about your compensation.

More information about compensation is available from the *Victims of Crime Bureau* (see Part 3: *Where to get Help*).

## Claims for counselling

In addition to claiming financial compensation, you can also apply for an initial two hours of free counselling by filling in the application form available from the Victims Compensation Tribunal. If you need more than two hours counselling you can talk with your counsellor about requesting that the Tribunal pay for further counselling. (This does not relate to counselling from Sexual Assault Services where services are free).

## Your rights

As the victim of a rape that occurred in NSW you are covered by the Charter of Victim's Rights. This Charter lists the rights of victims, such as:

- Having access to information about the investigation and prosecution process
- Being treated with courtesy, compassion and respect
- Having their identity protected
- Being protected from contact with the accused
- Having access to services
- Presenting a victim impact statement at the sentencing of the offender
- Getting information about the offender's release

You can get more information about victims' rights by calling the *Victims of Crime Bureau* (see Part 3: *Where to get Help*).



## **Making a complaint if something goes wrong**

As a victim of crime you should be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect.

If you think your rights are being ignored or you are not happy with your treatment as a victim it is often helpful to raise your concerns with a professional of the local agency concerned. If however you are still not satisfied with your treatment, make a formal written complaint to the relevant agency listed below:

### **Complaints or problems with the police**

NSW Police Service Customer Assistance Unit  
Ph: 1800 622 571 (toll free)

### **Complaints about your treatment as a victim**

Victims of Crime Bureau  
Ph: 1800 633 063 (toll free outside Sydney) or 9374 3000

### **Complaints about health service providers**

(eg Sexual Assault Service or Rape Crisis Service or doctors)  
Health Care Complaints Commission Ph: (02) 9219 7444

### **Complaints or problems with the Director of Public Prosecutions**

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions Ph: 9285 8606

### **Complaints about judges or magistrates**

Judicial Commission of NSW Ph: (02) 9299 4421

You can also contact the **Ombudsman's Office**, ph: 9286 1000, which deals with all complaints about any government departments and services, provided by government. This includes services provided by NSW Police Service, Attorney General's Department, and Health Department.

## Facts and myths

There are many myths about male rape. This section deals with common myths and provides information about the reality of the sexual assault of men. Many of these myths blame the victim for what happened or make excuses for the offenders.

*MYTH: Men can't be sexually assaulted, and if they were, they should have been able to prevent it. One of the strong beliefs in our culture about the rape of men is that any man, if he is a "real man", could have or should have been strong enough to prevent the rape by putting up a fight. It is believed that this is the only "manly thing to do". The message here is that failure to fight off an attack is a sign of weakness, a sign of not being "manly". Many male victims internalise the belief that they are not real men because they did not stop the rape. They feel a sense of "deficiency" and a deep sense of guilt and shame.*

**REALITY:** Men are raped. Any man can be sexually assaulted regardless of size, strength, appearance or sexual orientation. The belief that a man could have stopped the rape ignores the fact that in a rape, the threat of bodily harm or death overpowers the desire to defend oneself. Because men who rape other men know that their victims are more likely to have the strength to resist, they often use extreme brutality and threats before, during and after the rape. Even if no weapons are used, men (like women) can be raped if the rapist uses extortion, subtle forms of coercion, deception, or psychological control. Many men experience extreme fear and are terrorized by the offender's actions. Men who were sexually assaulted as children are particularly vulnerable to "freezing-up" during a sexual assault and not defend themselves because they are overwhelmed by memories of earlier sexual exploitations.



*MYTH: Only gay men are sexually assaulted.*

REALITY: Heterosexual, gay, bisexual and transgender persons are equally likely to be raped. Being sexually assaulted has nothing to do with your current or future sexual orientation. Your sexuality has no more to do with being raped than being robbed. Same sex rape is not a consensual act between gay men. Rape is never consensual, though it may or may not involve someone who is gay.

*MYTH: Only gay men sexually assault other men.*

REALITY: Most men who sexually assault other men identify themselves as heterosexual. This fact helps to highlight another reality - that sexual assault is about violence, anger, and control over another person, not lust or sexual attraction.

*MYTH: Men cannot be sexually assaulted by women.*

REALITY: Although the majority of perpetrators are male, women can also sexually assault men.

*MYTH: Erection or ejaculation during a sexual assault means you "really wanted it" or consented to it.*

REALITY: Erection and ejaculation are physiological responses that may result from physical contact whether it is pleasurable or not, wanted or not. These responses do not imply that you wanted or enjoyed the assault and do not indicate anything about your sexual orientation. Some offenders are aware how an erection and ejaculation can confuse a victim of sexual assault - this motivates them to manipulate their victims to the point of erection or ejaculation to increase their feelings of control and to discourage reporting of the crime.

*MYTH: Male rape happens only in prison.*

REALITY: Although it is true that male rape is a feature of prison culture, it is a mistake to assume that male rapes are limited to prisons. Although we lack reliable statistics showing the various contexts in which men rape men, we know that men of all ages can be the victims of rape in any setting. The truth is that men have been raped in schools, camps, workplaces, bars, parks, etc. This common belief (that male rape happens only in prisons) can help keep the rape of men secret.

### Overcoming Myths

To overcome myths it is important that they be recognised as just that - nothing but myths. The survivor himself needs to recognise this, as do those who are supporting him. In order to facilitate the victim's recovery, some basic messages need to be reinforced. These include:

- that same-sex rape is not a homosexual encounter
- that sex without consent is rape and is always a crime
- that fear of homosexuality often causes the victim to remain silent and others to respond in unhelpful, and hurtful ways
- that the victim's masculinity is not in doubt
- that rape is an act of violence, and has nothing to do with the person's sexuality, even though sexual activity occurred
- that focussing on what are facts can help a survivor to recover
- and that these messages need to be reinforced to others who know about the rape and who raise questions about it



# Part Two

## *For Partners, Family and Friends*

*This section of the booklet is designed to inform and support those who are in turn providing support for a man who has been the subject of a sexual assault.*

### **Do Partners, Family and Friends have a role?**

It is inevitable that sexual assault traumatises the victim. However it is often forgotten that such an assault is also traumatising for those close to the victim. They are caught in the difficult situation of wanting to provide support to the man who has been assaulted, often not knowing quite how to go about it, but at the same time continue to look after themselves. This section of the booklet aims to help those close to the survivor of the assault thread their way through this difficult set of demands.

What do you do if you learn that your son had been raped? That your partner has been gang raped, suffering forced anal penetration by several men? What if a male friend tells you he was threatened with a bashing if he refused to suck another man's penis? How would you react? *Would you be able to help him recover? Or do you think your reaction might make things worse for him?* These are truly difficult and confronting questions.

### This is a true story<sup>13</sup>

*"WE WERE HIS FRIENDS" He thought that because we were his friends, we would understand. We were university roommates, teammates, and drinking buddies. We laughed together, poked fun at each other, and always found humour in one another's lives. So, naturally, Bugs thought he could trust "the guys" with what happened. After all, we were his closest mates.*

*Walking back to the flat one night, Bugs took a shortcut through an alley. Two armed men stopped him. Each threatened him with a knife, and demanded money. Terrified, Bugs gave them his wallet and mobile phone. He did not fight back. But then, one of the men put the knife to Bugs's throat and ordered him to remove his pants. They each penetrated him anally and ejaculated inside him.*

*When Bugs stumbled his way back into the flat, he said nothing. He showered and went to his room. None of us thought twice about how he seemed to be behaving: it was late and it had been a long week. The guys were hanging out, having a few beers and partying. As we socialised, Bug remained silent and withdrawn. He was drinking more heavily than the rest of us, but he often did that. As the alcohol took effect, I'm sure each of us thought that everyone was having a great time.*

*Out of the blue, Bugs said "I've got to tell you guys something." We listened in stunned silence. **None of us had ever thought about a man being raped by other men.** No one knew what to say. And in that moment of silence, the group's response was being formulated. It could have gone either way. But it didn't. The alcohol, the climate of fun, and the ignorance of young men to know how to respond to the turmoil of a man who had been raped set the stage for what happened next.*



*Because much of the "bond" that held us together was based upon poking fun at one another, the first response to Bugs's story was a fun remark.. One of the guys said, "So, Bugs, did you get off?" That remark gave permission to the rest of us. A whole lot of jokes followed. We even debated whether his nickname should be changed from "Bugs" to "Bugger Boy", or just plain "Buggers".*

***I do not think that any of us meant to do harm.*** Rather, our insensitivity was born of two things: ignorance about rape and its consequences, and an established pattern of communication that never permitted us to be serious about things that were deeply distressing and emotional.

*Not long after that, Bugs moved out of the flat. He avoided us. We heard that he was drinking heavily and that he was doing badly at his grades. A woman we knew who had talked to Bugs joined us one afternoon. She told us about being raped herself, and she described for us what she knew Bugs must have been going through. All of us felt ashamed. But, by then, the damage had been done. All because of our insensitivity, we failed a friend...and we lost him.*

### **Your response is extremely important**

Rape can happen to any man or woman. As a friend, relative or partner of the man who has been raped, the way you respond to him is critical. Your response could help him overcome the effects of the assault and regain his life's equilibrium or enable the trauma of the sexual assault to continue long after the actual event is over.

Most of our knowledge about rape comes from studies of female victims. We have learnt much about how to help women regain their lives after a rape. However although few studies have looked at the needs of men who have been

raped, we do know that important similarities and differences exist between female and male rape. In both cases the experience is traumatic and recovery from the assault is significantly affected by the quality of the support, or lack of support, received from family and friends.

Friends and family will react in different ways when told about a man who has been raped. Some of their reactions may be helpful but sometimes their reactions may make it more difficult to cope.

### **Understand what has happened to him**

Because understanding the nature of rape is critical to your role in helping the victim, it is important to be clear about what happened to him. Rape is not about sex. Rape is about power, control, and domination. Rape is also a violent crime. The victim of rape has not "asked for it" and does not "enjoy it". When a man has been raped, he has been forced to endure things that he did not want and which probably terrified him; anal penetration, being forced to perform fellatio, or forced to touch another man's genitals. Most likely he has been terrorized with threats of extreme bodily harm or death. Rape can be life threatening and life altering.

When a man is raped, the perpetrator is nearly always a male. For men, being raped by a person of the same sex has a significant impact on how they think about the rape, their view of themselves, and most especially, how they feel about their sexuality. It also influences how others judge them, and how they recover from the assault.



## Male rape has nothing to do with homosexuality

Unfortunately, some male rape victims and their friends blame gay men in general for rape. Some survivors may feel humiliated and angry at being forced to participate in a sexual act with another man/men. They may blame the “gay lifestyle” for what they had to go through thinking that the man who assaulted them must be gay. It is important to know, however, that most men who rape other men identify as heterosexual and are usually involved in consensual relationships with women at the time of the assault. It is not a need for sex with other men that drives them to rape but a need to humiliate other people and exert power over them.

### A man who is raped needs to know:

- you believe him
- you believe he is not permanently damaged by the violation
- you are optimistic about his recovery and his ability to put his life back in order
- he can overcome his trauma and distress even if the rape is never forgotten
- you believe he has the inner strength to resist the stereotypes and stigma of being a male rape victim, and that you will help him to resist those ideas
- he can achieve recovery by turning his anger into the motivation to regain control over his life and move forward
- that you view the event as something that has happened in his life, not something that has changed him and his relationship with you forever

*Always remember that it took courage and trust for him to reveal to you that he was raped. He wants to recover and needs your*

support. This section of the booklet will help you to help him as he moves through the recovery process. You are to be commended for standing beside him.

### **Addressing the survivor's immediate concerns**

The man you know that has been raped has survived the experience. He was the victim of a serious crime but he has survived. It is important to him and his recovery that those around him acknowledge this and treat him like a survivor who can recover and not like a "lost cause".

Although no two rape survivors are alike, there are two key features in all rapes:

- rape is a traumatic experience that needs time for the man who has been raped to recover
- those personally close to the man who has been raped are also profoundly affected by the assault

*You can help by:*

- believing him and listening to him
- knowing what to expect and helping him to understand what is happening
- accepting his feelings and recognising his strengths
- communicating compassion and acceptance
- encouraging him to make decisions and help him to regain control
- treating his fears and concerns as understandable responses
- working to lessen his feelings of being isolated and alone
- holding realistic expectations, especially when he becomes frustrated or impatient



- helping him to identify resources and support persons
- being yourself and standing by him

These messages give the man who has been raped what he needs most of all - unconditional support by family and friends.

### Following the rape immediate issues to consider if you are supporting him are:

- *Extreme emotional response:* the time straight after the rape is an emotionally charged, confusing and anxious time. The victim will be in shock. He has been terrorized and violated. He will have many unanswered questions and will be unsure where to turn to for help. As a survivor who worked with other men in crisis said, *"I knew all the theory until I got raped. Until it happened to me. All the theory went out the window and I couldn't remember what to do. Just like they say, I started to blame myself"*.
- *Continuing emotional distress:* The emotional 'roller coaster' that the man who has been raped often experiences frequently continues for a significant time after the rape. Unfortunately the medical, police and legal response can sometimes unintentionally contribute to the man's trauma. For example, if he decides to report the rape to the police, they will advise him to have a forensic medical examination at a hospital. The medical involves examining the body for injuries, and requesting details about what happened during the assault. If required, swabs are taken looking for evidence and intimate examinations carried out. Blood may be taken to test for drugs, which are increasingly being used in sexual assaults.

These procedures are necessary for collecting evidence, but can be experienced as invasive and yet another

violation. A counsellor who is specially trained to talk with men and women who are raped, will be with him at all times. It is their job to provide support and answer any questions that he has about the medical and legal process and to minimize the man's trauma.

- *Fears about reporting the rape:* There are understandable reasons why men who have been raped do not report the crime to police or to their family members and friends. And when they do report it, they may not want to fully disclose the explicit details of the rape for fear of being blamed, humiliated or judged. Yet, even if he is reluctant to talk about the experience, he may still need to be seen by the doctor.
- *Concern about sexually transmitted diseases:* Depending on the nature of the assault he may need to have tests for sexually transmitted infections. Because many sexually transmitted diseases cannot be detected for a while, encourage him to return to his doctor for follow-up tests. Talk about any other medical concerns he may have. Helping him to receive medical care gives him the message that you believe his account of what happened and that you take the assault seriously. You are, therefore, communicating powerful support by letting him know that he will not face this time alone. If you are his sexual partner you will of course need to understand that he must practice safe sex until he has received the "all clear", usually about three months after the assault. Treat this time as something you are doing together, because you care about each other, not some inconvenience caused by him. A crisis like this can bring a couple together or drive them apart. The outcome depends on how you both work on it.



## Helpful ways to support a man who has been raped

The time immediately after the sexual assault is a time of crisis for a man who has been raped, and you can help. The things most needed at this time are gentleness and acceptance. To assist in his recovery, there are a number of helpful things you can do and other things not so helpful.

### The "Do's and Don'ts"

- DO refrain from unintentionally humiliating him by prying into the intimate aspects of the rape. Allow him to discuss these issues when he is ready.
- DO reassure him that he is not responsible for being raped. It is important for him to know that you do not equate the assault with bad judgement or weakness.
- DO encourage him to discuss, when he is ready, any beliefs and self-doubts he has about being raped. Help him to put the blame where it belongs...with the perpetrator.
- DO allow him to regain some control by encouraging him to make small decisions and then larger ones. This process can begin by asking him ordinary questions that simply provide him with a choice, such as, "Would you like a hot meal?, Do you want me to call in sick for you?, Would you prefer that I drive?". These simple questions encourage decision-making, which helps him regain control over his life. *Remember - rape is about having control taken away; recovery is about getting control back.*
- DO assure him that he is not alone. He needs to know, regardless of what happened, that your relationship will stay intact.

- DO allow time for him to regain his level of comfort around physical intimacy. Tell him you are OK with taking things slowly.
- DO encourage him to seek outside help, especially if he seems to be stuck.
- DO look after yourself through this crisis. If you need to, talk to someone else about what you are going through. Sexual Assault Services provide assistance for partners and friends too.

*BUT*

- DON'T tell him that you will “get” the offender because this will make him fearful about your safety.
- DON'T encourage or support any thoughts of his “getting even” with the offender by acting outside of the law. Men who have been raped are especially prone to consider retaliation. Seeking revenge, however, places him at risk of serious legal problems or more injury. He needs to be angry but be safe.
- DON'T let your anger about what happened shift the focus away from his needs to your concerns.
- DON'T make him feel that talking about what happened will upset you or that he is “imposing” an emotional burden on you. But make sure you take a break too and encourage him to use other people for support as well.
- DON'T tell him that you are uncomfortable discussing his concerns about his sexuality brought on by the rape. Showing such discomfort may confuse him further and he might think that no one can be trusted with the thoughts that may be troubling him the most.



- DON'T direct your anger toward him, even if he seems unresponsive to you.
- DON'T ask questions that hint that he is to blame. A safe rule is to avoid questions that begin with the word "why". For example *"Why did you go there?, Why didn't you yell?, Why didn't you fight him?, Why did you talk to him in the first place?"*
- DON'T imply, at any time, that he may have enjoyed the experience.
- DON'T tell him that everything is all right when it is not. Avoid downplaying the seriousness of what has happened, because this suggests that you believe he (or you) cannot deal with the situation.
- DON'T touch or hold him without asking first or unless he shows signs that this is OK by him.
- DON'T try to lift his spirits by making jokes about what has happened.
- DON'T tell him you know how he feels. Only he really knows.
- DON'T forget yourself. This is a time of crisis for you too.

It is best to keep in mind that each man will respond differently to the trauma of rape. Initially, many rape victims feel that they were somehow responsible for the assault. They are also likely to feel deep shame and self-doubt that lessens their willingness to speak openly. They might say they should be able to "handle it themselves" without "burdening" others with their troubles. By being patient, approachable, tolerant, and non-judgemental, you will create a climate in which he will eventually feel safe enough to share his pain and by doing so commence the journey of recovery.

## Long term communication strategies

Discussing the assault can often produce a lot of anxiety for men who are raped, yet good communication is important for his long term recovery and to the survival of the valued relationships in his life. However, these relationships are likely to go through a lot of strain in the aftermath of the assault. Communication tends to be shut down, people feel frustrated and helpless, and there may be mutual feelings of resentment. Despite the emotional turmoil you are both going through, there are a couple of things you can do to promote effective communication.

- *Respect his fear.* Offenders often make threats of serious physical harm or even death if the victim does not do what they are told, or if they tell anyone what happened. Although this fear remains long after the assault, male victims especially are reluctant to admit they are afraid. Tell him that fear is normal and an understandable response to a situation of overwhelming terror, and that being fearful does not mean he is a coward. Rather, admitting fear is an indication of trust and is a positive step in overcoming that fear.
- *Try to cope with his strong feelings* and his mood swings, and remain consistent in your support.
- *Be patient.* Listen without being critical and without giving unsolicited advice. Give him the opportunity to express his feelings at a pace that is comfortable to him. If he is reluctant to talk, do not get angry with him.
- *Do not pressure him to self-disclose* or “interrogate” him by insisting that he re-tell all the details of the assault repeatedly. Forcing him to be frank and open may cause resentment and withdrawal.



- *Do not show anger or accuse him of "hiding something"* because he did not tell you sooner, or because he did not tell all the details initially. Silence gives him time to sort through the traumatic experience and try to make sense of it. Silence is not a rejection of you.
- *Notice if there are recurring themes in your conversations with him.* This may give clues that provide some insight into issues that are troubling him. Sometimes, the experience of being raped can bring up "unfinished business" for a person, including things that existed before the assault.
- *If the man who has been raped is gay,* do not use his victimization as an opportunity to try to get him to "change" his sexual orientation. This can often happen when family members are struggling with the victim's choice of sexuality, even before the assault. It will be harmful for both his recovery and your relationship with him, to make comments such as, "See what can happen by hanging out in those places with those people!".
- *Talk with him about others he may want to discuss the rape with.* Remember the rape will be one of the most difficult things that he will ever have to deal with. So respect his privacy and do not discuss the assault with anyone else unless he says it is OK.
- *It is important that you both discuss the effect of the assault on your relationship,* at some stage. The emotional consequences of sexual assault are traumatic for everyone so it is important to talk about how it is affecting you both. Calmly sharing your feelings and your vulnerabilities will encourage the mutual nurturing that helps the recovery process.

# Part Three

## *Where to get help*

### 24-hour services

#### **NSW Health Sexual Assault Services**

Sexual Assault Services are based in hospitals (eg Royal North Shore, St George, Royal Prince Alfred, Westmead) or community health centres across NSW.

Contact your local Service through the Hospital or the Community Health Service, listed in the White Pages.

<b>Lifeline</b>	13 11 14
<b>Youth line</b>	6257 2333
<b>Kids Help line</b>	1800 551 800
<b>Victims of Crime Bureau</b>	9374 3000 or 1800 633 063

[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au./voc](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au./voc)

<b>NSW Police Service Switch</b>	9281 0000
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<b>Telephone Interpreter Service</b>	13 14 50
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### Other Services (Day time)

<b>Witness Assistance Service</b>	9285 8949 or 1800 814 534
TTY	9285 8646

<b>Lifecare</b>	9708 2088
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<b>NSW Police Service Customer Assistance Unit</b>	9281 0000 or 1800 622 571
<b>SAMSSA</b> <i>(Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault)</i>	6232 7166
<b>Lesbian and Gay anti-Violence Project</b>	9206 2116 or 1800 184 527
<b>Sydney Sexual Health Centre</b>	9382 7440 or 1800 451 624
<b>Lesbian and Gay Counselling Line</b> <i>(4pm -midnight)</i>	9207 2800 or 1800 063 060
<b>Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWoP)</b>	9319 4866 or 1800 622 902
<b>The Gender Centre</b> <i>(Services for transgendered people)</i>	9569 2366

## Suggested readings on adult male rape

Brownmiller, S. (1975) *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Estric, S. (1987). *Real Rape*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

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Iseley, P. (1991). *Adult Male Sexual Assault in the Community: A Literature Review and Group Treatment Model*. In A. Burgess (Ed.), *Rape and Sexual Assault 111- A Research Handbook*. Ed. Ann Burgess. (Pg 161-178). New York: Garland Publishing.

McMullen, R. (1990). *Male Rape: Breaking the Silence on the Last Taboo*. London: The Gay Men's Press.

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McEvoy, A., Brookings, J., & Rollo, D. (1999). *If He Is Raped: A Guidebook for Parents, Partners, Spouses, and Friends*. Florida: Learning Publications.

Mendel, M. P., (1995). *The Male Survivor*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

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2. Sorenson, Susan. (1987). *The prevalence of adult sexual assault*. American Journal of Epidemiology, 126.6, 1154-1164.
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4. Heilpern, D. (1988). *Fear or Favour Sexual Assault of Young Prisoners*. Queensland: Southern Cross University Press.
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6. Myers, M. (1989). *Men Sexually Assaulted as Adults and Sexually Abused as Boys*, Archives Of Sexual Behaviour, 18.3, 203-215.
7. Garnets, L., Herek, G., & Levy, B. (1993). *Violence and Victimization of Lesbians and Gay Men*. Mental Health Consequences: In L. Garnets & D. Kimmel (Eds.), Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Male Experiences. (1993). New York: Columbia University Press.
8. Groth, A.N., & Burgess. A. (1980). *Male Rape: Offenders and Victims*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 137.7, 806-810.
9. Myers, M. (1989). *Men Sexually Assaulted as Adults and Sexually Abused as Boys*, Archives Of Sexual Behaviour, 18.3, 203-215.
10. Groth, A.N., & Burgess. A. (1980). *Male Rape: Offenders and Victims*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 137.7, 806-810.
11. Myers, M. (1989). *Men Sexually Assaulted as Adults and Sexually Abused as Boys*, Archives Of Sexual Behaviour, 18.3, 203-215.
12. Scarce, M. (1997). *Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame*. New York: Insight Books.
13. McEvoy, A., Brookings, J., & Rollo, D. (1999). *If He Is Raped: A Guidebook for Parents, Partners, Spouses, and Friends*. Florida: Learning Publication.

