

# INFORMATION ABOUT DATE RAPE

As children we were warned not to talk to strangers; the fact is that we are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone we know: a friend, a relative, an employer, a date or someone we have recently met.

There are many different kinds of acquaintance rape; date rape is one of the most confusing kinds. Many teen and adult males do not view themselves as rapists. They believe that spending money on a woman creates a situation where the date owes them sex at the end of the evening. Some men also believe that women play hard to get, say "no" and mean "yes", and enjoy being pursued by an aggressive male. Because some men perceive that sex is their right, many women are raped by the men they are dating. Acquaintance rape is often planned. Sexual assault is never the victim's fault. It is the responsibility of the person who committed the act of violence.

When rape occurs within a social context there is often a common pattern. The encounter develops in these stages:

**Intrusion stage** where one person verbally or physically invades the space (limits, comfort zone) of another person.

**Desensitization stage** where the assailant continues intrusions until the victim becomes desensitized, or used to them.

**Isolation stage** in which the assailant plans to get the victim alone in order to rape. The scene may be manipulation or outright brutality. Out of fear, and the need to survive, victims may accommodate the situation in order to lessen the potential for violence. Not fighting back or complying with the demands of the rapist makes it no less a rape.

The emotional and physical effects of date or acquaintance rape are especially devastating because the crime is the ultimate betrayal of someone's trust. The after-effects are similar to rape by a stranger:

Sleeplessness	Poor concentration
Overeating or appetite loss	Anxiety
Nightmares	Loss of self confidence
Stress-related illness	Feelings of grief and despair
Fear	

Individuals who have been assaulted by someone they know may also feel guilty or responsible for the assault, feel betrayed, question their judgment and have difficulty trusting people. Recovery from an assault can be assisted by contacting an advocate who understands the needs of sexual assault victims. Many communities have rape crisis centers with 24-hour counseling and advocacy services.

**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK**  
*For Victims of Sexual Assault and  
Domestic Violence*

**Emergency Help — Counseling — Information**

**24-hour Hotline No Charge**

**PHONE: 703-360-7273  
TDD: 703-799-8253**