Why is Sexual Violence a Men’s Issue?

...because men know survivors. Statistically, it is very likely that someone you know and care about has been sexually assaulted (whether you are aware of it or not). In the U.S. alone, more than one million women and girls are raped each year. If a friend, girlfriend, sister, or other person discloses a sexual assault, you need to be prepared to respond with sensitivity, compassion, and understanding. Insensitive or controlling responses can contribute to the survivor feeling even more victimized; a supportive male presence during a survivor’s recovery, however, can be invaluable.

...because men are sexually assaulted. An astonishing 10-20% of males are sexually violated at some point in their lives. Men are not immune to the epidemic of sexual violence, nor are males safe from the stigma that society attaches to victims of rape and other assault. Many male survivors of sexual assault remain silent for fear of being doubted or blamed for their own victimization.

...because some men sexually assault. Men commit the great majority of all sexually violent crimes. Even when men are victimized, other men are most often the perpetrators.

...because sexual violence affects how women view men. Taking into account that 80% of victims know the man who raped them, it can become very difficult for women to distinguish “safe guys” from men who are dangerous and therefore seen as “potential rapists.” Sexual assault can result in all men being viewed with mistrust.

...because men can stop sexual violence. Men can have a powerful influence in stopping the use of sex as an instrument of power and control. All men can play a vital role in this process by challenging rape-supporting attitudes and behaviors and by raising awareness about the damaging impact of sexual violence.

What Men Can Do:

Educate yourself & others about consent. The absence of “No” is not the equivalent of “Yes.” Consent must be clear, informed, and freely and actively given to be considered valid. A “Yes” from an intoxicated (or otherwise impaired) person is legally considered the equivalent of “No.” Perpetrators are held responsible for their behavior even if they themselves are intoxicated.

Support survivors of sexual violence. If someone discloses that they have been assaulted:
* Listen. Be there. Don't be judgmental. Encourage your friend to seriously consider reporting the rape to law enforcement authorities. A counselor can provide the information your friend will need to make this decision.

* Be patient. Remember, it will take your friend some time to deal with the crime.

* Let your friend know that professional help is available. Encourage him or her to seek help, but realize that only your friend can make this decision. You can seek help (including hotlines) to know how to support your friend.

* Resist the urge to “take charge” or avenge the crime—inadvertently taking decisions away from the survivor can be re-victimizing, making her feel even less in control than after the assault.
Be aware of language. Words are very powerful. Referring to a woman as “bitch,” “freak,” “whore,” “baby,” or “dog,” or telling sexist jokes, makes it easier to see women as less than human. Demeaning others makes it easier to harm them and disregard their rights.

Speak up. You may never see a sexual assault in progress, but you will see and hear attitudes and behaviors that degrade women and promote sexual assault, harassment, or violence. Research shows that most men are uncomfortable with language and actions that objectify women, but don’t speak up because they mistakenly think that they are in the minority. When someone tells a disrespectful joke about women or uses demeaning language, speak up. It’s not okay, and you’re not alone.

Intervene. If you do see a sexual assault, harassment, abuse, stalking, or other violation in progress, don’t be a bystander! Speak up, enlist help, contact the authorities, etc. Even when an assault has not happened yet, if you see someone who is vulnerable (ex. intoxicated, alone, in an un-comfortable or intimidating situation, and/or being pursued by a “shady” character), you can enlist help to get them into safer circumstances.

Be mindful of media & culture. Be aware of the messages underlying the movies, television, video games and internet sites you observe. Avoid shows/movies/sites/games that objectify women or link sex with violence. Be aware of the sometimes subtle, sometimes overt sexist messages that come across in the media; discuss it with others.

Get help if you have been assaulted. Don’t let stigma or shame keep you from healing. You are not alone.

Get involved. Contact the counselor, chaplain, or Our Voice to find out ways that you can positively impact the culture and reduce sexual assault. Men can have a powerful impact when it comes to the prevention of sexual assault and the healing of survivors. The impact of male advocacy on this issue cannot be underestimated.

Resources

The Montreat College Counseling Center
(828) 669-8012 x3538
Jane Carter, Director of Counseling Located in the Health Center below Bell Library.
www.montreat.edu/counseling

Our Voice 24-Hour Crisis Line
(828) 255-7576.
The Our Voice office in Asheville offers other free, confidential services including counseling, law enforcement accompaniment/court assistance, emergency room advocacy, and outreach.
Office # (828)252-0562

National Sexual Assault Hotline 1-800-656-HOPE
for free, confidential counseling, 24 hours a day:

Men Can Stop Rape www.mencanstoprape.org/

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
www.rainn.org

Chaplain 669-8012 x3801
Campus Police 713-2520
Student Services 669-8012 x3631
Student Health Services 669-8012 x3536
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