Understanding Sexual Assault or Abuse

INTERVENTION

HOW OFTEN DOES SEXUAL ASSAULT or ABUSE HAPPEN?

The rate of sexual assault has fallen every year since the 1990's, but hundreds of thousands of people still experience assault or abuse every year. Individuals who have been diagnosed with autism may be at greater risk of being victims of sexual assault or abuse.

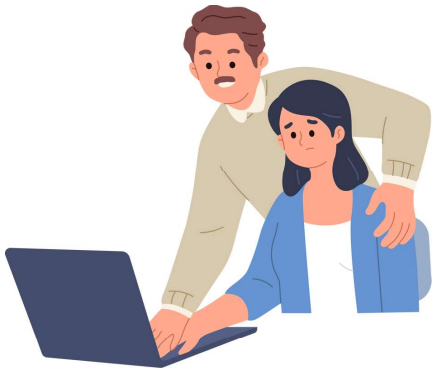
Who Sexually Assaults or Abuses Others?

People who assault or abuse others are often people who have a personal relationship, such as a husband or wife, partner, family member, provider, or caregiver. Sometimes strangers can abuse people, but this is not as common. It's important to watch for warnings of abuse in your personal relationships, such as if the other person:

- Hitting or touching in ways the person doesn't want to be touched
- Calls the person names or insults them
- Tells the person they can't talk to their friends or family members
- Refuses to be their friend or partner unless they do things they don't want to
- Denies someone the things they need unless they do things that they want
- Forces someone to spend time with them
- Refuses to help do things around the house when they are supposed to help
- Refuses to help someone eat, drink, or go to the bathroom, even though they are supposed to help do those things

All of these things are signs of abuse. There are other actions that may also be abuse. Just because a sign of abuse does not appear on this list does not mean it is not abuse.

Family members do NOT have the right to hurt people or make them feel terrible just because they are related. Individuals have the right to control their own body and their own life.



Why Do People Sexually Assault or Abuse Others?

There is no single reason why people sexually assault or abuse others. However, there are some things that are more common among people who sexually assault or abuse others:

- Negative views about the people they assault
- False beliefs that violence is a good thing
- False beliefs that sexual assault or abuse doesn't hurt others
- Low self-esteem and feeling worthless
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Experienced abuse when they were children
- Are unable to form healthy relationships
- Like to control others

Offenders who target people with autism and intellectual disabilities often do so because they believe these individuals can be easily manipulated and will have difficulty testifying later.

Be Safe Ask. Listen. Respect.

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