



Your Most Trusted Resource
for Life's Relationships

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TEENS AND ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

"-Jenny-" is 16 and cannot remember how she got home after a party last night. She remembered drinking some punch, talking to a cute boy, and then nothing else. "-Kaylee-" is 17 and confused about a date. He seemed like a nice guy, but things got out of hand back at his house. She wonders if she was raped, but then thought otherwise since there were no bruises on her body. She feels guilty for not being able to stop him.

Acquaintance rape or "date rape" is an often misunderstood crime. There are many people who don't think it's a "real rape." The truth is, victims of acquaintance rape often feel the same as those who have been raped by a stranger—but they struggle with added feelings of confusion ("Was it real?") and not trusting their own judgment ("I thought he was my friend."). At least 80% of all rapes are crimes committed by someone in a dating relationship or by someone the victim knows (911rape.org).

How do you protect your teen from being a victim of this very serious crime?

Here are some tips:

1. Talk with your teenager about "gut" feelings. Most victims will later recall that they had a bad feeling but didn't listen to their "gut."
2. Teach your teenagers to know their sexual limits and to be clear about them with their date and before they go out. They have the right to say "no" to any advances that they feel uncomfortable about, and to expect their decision to be respected.
3. Teens need to be clear with what they say. Don't give mixed messages. If they are unsure about a situation, it's better to stop than to wonder "if only" later on.

4. Be careful in situations where drugs or alcohol are involved. Many victims of acquaintance rape report being drugged. So called "date-rape" drugs are often tasteless and odorless. Teach your teens to watch their drinks—even if it's just water or soda. Even without "date-rape" drugs, alcohol and drugs make teens less aware of their surroundings and unable to think clearly.
5. Teens need to "make a fuss" if they feel unsafe. Teach your teens to be clear with a date if they think the other person is being too pushy or forceful. Tell them to get loud if that person will not back off, even if they feel embarrassed or afraid that they over-reacted.
6. Have a buddy system when your teens go out. Have them make clear agreements that they will watch out for each other and that no one will leave without the other, especially if someone seems to be intoxicated and appears to want to go with another person. Tell your teens not to leave with someone they don't know very well. Tell them not to leave anyone behind.
7. Know that if a person is having sex with someone who is mentally or physically unable to give his or her consent, or is unable to stop it, that person may be committing a sexual crime.
8. Don't make the mistake of only sharing these tips with your daughters; 1 in 33 men are victims of sexual assault.

Angela D. Soper, LCSW, is a counselor and Clinical Director at Shield-Bearer Counseling Centers. Upcoming presentation dates on dating violence in the Greater Houston area include: November 10, 2010, December 12, 2010 and February 16, 2011
Call Roy at 281.894.7222 to observe a live presentation. Learn more about Angela Soper and Shield-Bearer, a 501c3 charity, at www.FightingForHearts.Org.