



The impact of sexual assault

The impact of sexual assault is determined by many factors and each survivor reacts to the experience in her or his unique way. There is no right or wrong way to feel and no set time for when you should be feeling better. However, there are some common responses reported by survivors in terms of the impact of being sexually assaulted. These include impact on physical, emotional and psychological health as well as on behaviour and social relationships.

Societal myths about sexual assault ("She must have done something to encourage it" or "Men don't get raped") can add to the confusion and distress of survivors. Sexual assault is a traumatic, humiliating and often violent experience and aims to disempower and hurt.

Survivors come from all cultures and age groups, including very young children. Although the majority of survivors who are sexually assaulted are female, men and boys also experience rape and sexual abuse. The impact of sexual assault for survivors of either sex is traumatic and all need support, consideration and respect.

How you might feel

Like it's your fault	Ashamed	Like the nightmares will never stop
Like no-one understands	Lost	Sad
Angry	Scared	Crazy
Tired	Dazed	Worthless
Dirty	Confused	Unsafe
Like you want to hurt yourself	Alone	Unable to trust
Hopeless	Jumpy	Powerless
Numb	Loss of control	In denial

Some of the effects of sexual assault

Confused emotions	Giving up on life	Sexually transmitted infections
Nightmares	Shame	Self blame
Isolation	Flashbacks	Homelessness
Loss of trust	Difficulties with sex and intimacy	Depression



Exhaustion	Eating disorders	Undirected anger
Reliving the experience	Self harm	Problems with drubs & alcohol
Can't sleep	Pregnancy	Can't concentrate
Problems with relationships	Low self esteem	Reliving the experience
Can't stop thinking about it	Problems at school	