

Little or no consequences: Some people are so set in their beliefs that they don't realize they are committing a crime. Others convince themselves that they have just had 'rough sex' or convinced their partner "a little." A man who is aware he applied pressure or force usually counts on the fact that his partner will not make trouble, that she will share the blame, or feel that she asked for it. This is especially true when the partner is doing something that she isn't supposed to be doing like drinking, doing drugs, being at a party, etc.

Some people knowingly commit date rape: As with all rapes, date rape is sometimes an expression of anger against women. Some people are also excited by forced or violent sexual activity. Forcing sex may make them feel strong, powerful and in control. Others just think that it is their right to expect sex from a date.

Self-Blame: Some people may give in to sexual pressure or blame themselves for the sexual assault especially if they were flirting, drinking, doing drugs, etc. People are less likely to report dating sexual assault because they figure that others will blame them as well.

(adapted from "Lindsay's Story" by the Mississauga Hospital Sexual Assault Team)



If you or someone you know
needs support, please call

About Avalon Sexual Assault Centre: Who We Are

Established in 1983, Avalon Centre is the only sexual assault centre in the Halifax Regional Municipality. We are a registered, not-for-profit, community based, charitable organization. We gratefully received funding from The NS Department of Community Services, The NS Department of Health, The Law Foundation of Nova Scotia, and from special projects and private donations.

Vision Statement:

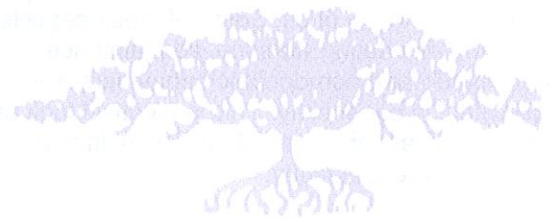
The Avalon Sexual Assault Centre is a feminist organization working to eliminate sexual assault/abuse, and to change the current socio-political culture that fosters sexism, social injustice and other forms of oppression.

Mission Statement:

To provide services for those affected by sexual violence, with primary emphasis on support, education, counselling and leadership/advocacy services for women.

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YOUTH GUIDE TO DATING SEXUAL ASSAULT

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Taking a critical look at our relationships

The following aspects of adolescent relationships are not meant as insults to our relationships; they are a reality for many of us. Some of these aspects are reasons why dating violence, acquaintance sexual assault, and homophobic behaviours are still prevalent in our society. This is a critical look at why some (not all) of us get into and stay in relationships that are unhealthy.

- The social demands of adolescence dictate that a girl should have a boyfriend.
- Peer pressure and the fear of being different motivates conformity to peer norms.
- Gender role definitions are usually stereotypical with very little flexibility.
- Pressures to continually prove we fit these stereotypes may lead to exaggerated behaviours. (e.g. independence from family, jock, popular, attractive)
- Need for acceptance and affection.
- Feeling that we can handle anything.
- Fear of losing a relationship.
- Assumptions or expectations based on race or ethnic background.
- Little or no knowledge of what constitutes an unhealthy or abusive relationship.
- Feeling that abusive situations happen to others but will never happen to us.
- Many of us are just starting to experiment with drugs and alcohol, so we have little experience with them. Alcohol is a factor in many dating sexual assaults.
- A feeling that adults overreact because they don't understand.



- Failure to "set limits" ahead of time that would allow us to avoid problem situations.
- Pressure on males to date many women to prove their manhood.
- Young women whose first male partners are three or more years older than them may not question unhealthy, risky or violent incidents because they were committed by an older more experienced partner.

(adapted from "Aspects specific to adolescent relationships")

Why does dating sexual assault happen?

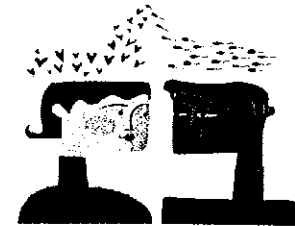
Sex means different things to men and women.

Women generally think of sex in terms of romance and love. Women may want to be affectionate without wanting to have sex. Men generally see sex as a natural end to fooling around with someone. If either party doesn't understand this, there is room for miscommunication leading to date or acquaintance rape.

Myths: Many men and women believe in the myths that are taught to us as we grow up. People sometimes feel that clothes, attitude, miscommunication, and other factors may be reasons to believe that someone is willing to have sex.

A sense of immunity to date rape: Women are taught that it is strangers who rape them, not the men they know. Many women are raised to expect men to protect and care for them. They don't believe that these people would do anything to harm them. Women are usually taught to protect themselves from strangers, especially when they are walking alone on dark streets, and secluded places. They are not taught to protect themselves in their homes with people they know and trust, even though this is how most rapes happen.

Women and men have been raised differently: Women are socialized to be more passive and dependent than men. They are expected to be nurturing and caring. They are reprimanded for expressing their feelings forcefully or hurting the feelings of others. Men are taught, and expected, to do just this. The extent to which a man is considered "manly" or "macho" is determined by how many sports he plays, how many fights he gets into, and how many women he can sleep with. Men are encouraged to have strong sexual feelings and experiment sexually, as opposed to women who are not encouraged to explore their sexuality. This is why men are most likely to be the aggressors.



Lack of communication: Women and men are not encouraged to talk openly about their sexuality with each other. As a result, consent may be assumed by either person without verbally discussing it. They look for physical cues, and act on them. Unfortunately, these can very easily be misinterpreted. People may see the way a woman dresses, the fact that she was drunk or high, or even that they were into kissing and stuff, as a go-ahead for sex. Women may not see it this way at all.