Reaching Out

• Know that it wasn’t your fault and you’re not to blame.
• Understand that forced sex is never acceptable; it is against the law.
• It is always your right to say “no,” and unless you specifically said “yes,” you did not give consent.
• You can report sexual assault to law enforcement, even if you knew the perpetrator. You may be able to receive an order for protection to keep the perpetrator away from you.
• You deserve a forensic medical exam to collect evidence and to check for injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy. You do not have to report the crime to law enforcement in order to receive this exam.
• If you believe you may have been drugged, you can discuss with your forensic exam provider having a urine test within the first three days to detect the presence of a date rape drug.
• Free supportive services are available in your community. You can talk to counselors in person or on a hotline, join a support group, get information or get help handling problems that are happening in your life because of the attack.
• Know that you don’t have to go through it alone. There are understanding people who will believe you and will support you as you recover. They can also help your family and friends understand what you are going through.

No one asks or deserves to be raped!
If it is against your will or consent, it is against the law and it’s not your fault!

There is help… you can talk with someone who will listen, who will understand.

You don’t need to hide your feelings or pretend they are not there.
You are not alone.

For more information, contact your local rape crisis center.

Florida Council Against Sexual Violence
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Information Line: 1-888-956-RAPE
Office: (850) 297-2000
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Common Reactions to Victimization

Victims of date rape may experience many different feelings in response to their crisis. Victims may be confused about whether to tell the police, their school and their family and friends about what happened. Some common feelings include:

- Confusion
- Self-blame
- Embarrassment
- Helplessness
- Denial
- Shock
- Fear
- Disbelief
- Anger

Victims sometimes want to forget that this happened to them. But sexual assault can create many long-term effects. Some common problems are:

- Nightmares or problems sleeping
- Memories and thoughts about the violence
- Depression
- Drugs and alcohol used as a way to calm down or forget
- Eating disorders
- Suicidal thoughts
- Trouble concentrating
- Health problems
- Trust issues in relationships
- Flashbacks

Victims deserve the help of a rape crisis advocate to help them cope with their feelings and decisions.

Know the Facts: If it is against your will, it is against the law.

We want to trust the people in our lives: our friends, family members and community acquaintances. Unfortunately, the truth is that we are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone we know: a friend, a relative, an employer, a date or someone we have recently met, than by a stranger. Acquaintance rape occurs when someone you know uses physical strength, emotional bargaining, bullying, threats, blackmail, alcohol, drugs or mind games to force you to have sex. If you do not consent freely, and someone has sexual contact with you anyway, it is a crime.

There are many different types of acquaintance rape. Date rape is one of the most confusing kinds. Some men believe that spending money on women creates situations in which their date owes them sex. Some men also believe that women play hard to get and say “no” but really mean “yes,” and that women will be afraid to tell anyone what happened. Because some men believe that sex is their right, many women are raped by the men they are dating. It is not simply a lack of communication or a result of lack of control. Rape is an act of violence and of power, which is often planned.

Sexual assault is NEVER the victim’s fault. It is the responsibility of the person who committed the act of violence.

Women are most at risk for rape between ages 16 and 24. Since this is when young women begin to date, they are particularly vulnerable to being a victim of date rape.