

Tough Issues: Youth and Sexual Assault



Chapter Three

The Impact of Sexual Assault

Impact of Rape

Individuals who have been assaulted by someone they know may feel guilty or responsible for the abuse.

They may feel betrayed, and have difficulty trusting people.

Physical Injury

The face, head and neck are most common for physical injury to sexual assault victims.

Psychological Impact

The psychological cost to the victim is difficult to measure.

In a research study, forty percent of the victims ranked the rape as the most upsetting event in their lives.

Psychological Impact

Women said the rape was worse than:

- a parent's death
- a family suicide
- having a child taken away by a social service agency

Phase 1: Rape Trauma Syndrome (RTS)

Phase 1 is experienced during the attack.

At some point during the attack, the victim realizes that something “bad”, “terrible” or “hurtful” is happening.

RTS Phase 2: Acute

The Acute Phase, typically occurs after the sexual assault.

The victim is in a state of shock and disbelief.

RTS Phase 3: Outward Adjustment

In an attempt to put the sexual assault behind her and move on with her life, the victim may suddenly want to drop out of counseling or stop pursuing legal action.

RTS Phase 4: Resolution/Integration Phase

This phase is typically referred to as the Resolution or Integration Phase.

This is where the victim will process the trauma from the sexual assault and begin to integrate the experience into her life.

Rape Trauma Syndrome

Understanding Rape Trauma Syndrome can aid a victim in the healing process. It will explain some of their behaviors, thoughts, and reactions.