RSVP
rape & sexual violence project

Male Survivors of Rape and Sexual Assault: Myths & Misconceptions

Sexual abuse can be a difficult issue for society and individuals to talk about or understand, and so many myths are sadly formed. This misinformation is also sustained through biased and unbalanced reporting in the media, and on social media too. Don't believe the myths, you are not responsible for what happened, your abuser is.

Myths and misconceptions about the sexual assault and sexual abuse of men and boys can make the reality of being a survivor a difficult one, increasing isolation and maintaining stigma. Below, we dispel some of the common myths surrounding the sexual assault and abuse of males.

MYTH: Men and boys can't be sexually abused. They can. Any man or boy can be sexually assaulted regardless of size, strength, appearance or sexual orientation.

MYTH: If I was drinking or taking drugs, it was my fault. Nothing you do entitles another person to assault you. If you had been drinking or taking drugs and someone sexually abused you, that doesn't make it your fault or mean that you asked for or deserved what happened.

MYTH: Only gay men and boys are sexually abused. Sexual abuse can happen to heterosexual, gay and bisexual men and boys and people who identify as non-binary or trans men. Being sexually abused has nothing to do with your current or future sexual or gender identity.

MYTH: Male abusers who sexually assault men and boys must be gay. Sexual assault is not about lust, desire, sexual attraction or sexual orientation of the abuser. It is about violence, anger, power and control over another person.

MYTH: Sexual abuse makes you gay. Sometimes survivors question whether the sexual abuse has had an impact on their sexual orientation. You may worry that you were abused because you were gay, or that the abuse will 'make' you gay. The majority of men sexually abused by other men in childhood identify as heterosexual in adult life (Survivors UK). What research there is points to sexual abuse having no significant effect on adult sexual orientation. However, being a survivor can leave you feeling uncomfortable or unsure about your sexual identity.

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MYTH: Men and boys cannot be sexually abused by women. Although the majority of perpetrators are male, men and boys can also be sexually abused by females.

MYTH: Erection or ejaculation during sexual abuse means you "really wanted it" or "consented to it." Erection and ejaculation are physiological/ bodily responses that may result from mere physical contact or even extreme stress. These responses do not imply that you "wanted "or enjoyed the assault and do not indicate anything about your sexual orientation.

Some perpetrators are aware of how erection and ejaculation can confuse a victim of sexual assault– this motivates them to manipulate their victims to the point of erection or ejaculation to increase their feelings of control and discourage people from telling their story.

MYTH: Being sexually abused will make you an abuser. The vast majority of men and boys who have experienced childhood abuse or adult assault do NOT go on to sexually abuse.

MYTH: If a female used or abused a man or boy, he was "lucky," and if he doesn't feel that way there's something wrong with him. This myth, like several of the others, comes from the image of masculinity that can be learnt from very early on. It says not only that males can't be sexually abused, but that any sexual experience with girls and women, especially older ones, is evidence that he's a "real man." Again, the confusion comes from focusing on the sexual aspect rather than the abusive one – the exploitation and betrayal by a more powerful, trusted or admired person (who can be a child or adult).

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Useful links

Survivors Manchester have a range of resources on their website for male survivors including self-help information www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk

Survivors UK is a national charity for male survivors with self-help information, a helpline and more www.survivorsuk.org

Living Well has a range of other self-help information for male survivors visit

http://www.livingwell.org.au/managing-difficulties/

The Male Survivors Partnership has a directory to make it easier for boys and men to find services local to them http://www.malesurvivor.co.uk/male-survivors-services/#1496241499449-f0f9b123-c429 There is also a National Helpline for male survivors. You can call them on: 0808 800 5005

You don't need to deal with the effects of sexual violence, sexual assault or sexual abuse alone. RSVP are here to offer support to survivors, to enable you to live a live with hope and confidence which is free from abuse.

We offer:

- Specialist counselling for survivors and their supporters
- Independent sexual violence advocates (ISVAS) to assist you through criminal or civil proceedings or in crisis, whether you have reported or not
- Social groups and coffee mornings focusing on self-help
- Emotional support on the telephone helpline 0121 643 4136

These are some of our services. For more ways we can support you contact:

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info@rsvporg.co.uk
isva@rsvporg.co.uk
www.rsvporg.co.uk/services
@RSVP_West_Mids
facebook.com/RSVPWM
instagram.com/RSVPWM

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