

## Breaking The Myths About Sexual Abuse

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.

**MYTH: You're responsible for being abused if you wear revealing clothes or flirt.** What you wear and how you behave is immaterial. You're not 'asking' to be sexually abused, no one does; you're not to blame. Sexual assault is an act of power and control for which the abuser alone is responsible.

**MYTH: You're responsible for being raped or abused if you were drunk or taking drugs.** You have to consent to have sex; if you're incapacitated though drink or drugs you cannot give your consent and it is rape or abuse. The blame lies with the abuser, not you.

**MYTH: When you say "no" you really mean "yes".** 'No' always means 'no'. If you feel pressured to say "yes" this is not consent either. Sexual activity without consent is sexual assault. Even if you have consented to have sex you have the right to change your mind at any time, this should be respected and the other person should stop.

**MYTH: You can't be raped or sexually assaulted if you've had sex with each other before, or if they're your wife, husband or partner.** Previous sex with a person, or being in a relationship with them, doesn't mean they can't sexually abuse you. You must consent each time you have sexual contact and you can change your mind about having sex at any point.

**MYTH: It wasn't rape or abuse because you didn't 'fight back' or scream.** People respond in different ways to traumatic experiences. Just because you didn't 'fight back', it doesn't mean you're to blame or the abuse didn't happen. It is very common to freeze and be unable to respond in any other way.

**MYTH: Once a man is sexually aroused he has to have sex.** Men can stop and control their behaviour; if they rape or abuse this is a choice not an urge.

RSVP services: 0121 643 0301 Helpline: 0121 643 4136 Email: [info@rsvporg.co.uk](mailto:info@rsvporg.co.uk)

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**MYTH: If you didn't report the sexual abuse immediately it didn't happen.**

There may be many reasons why a person doesn't report. You might feel ashamed that the abuse has happened, or worried you won't be believed or that there may be repercussions to reporting. If you haven't reported immediately, or at all, it doesn't mean it hasn't happened or that you can't report in the future.

**MYTH: If you're not upset the abuse probably didn't happen.** We all respond to traumatic experiences in different ways. You might not feel emotional; being in denial or shock, or feeling detached are very common. How you respond doesn't mean the trauma didn't happen or make it any less serious.

**MYTH: If you're a sex worker you can't be raped or sexually abused.** Being involved in sex work does not give people permission to do whatever they want to you. Consent can be withdrawn at any time and should always be respected.

**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 life 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:-

☎ 0121 643 0301

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@ isva@rsvporg.co.uk

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@ www.rsvporg.co.uk/services

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