A GUIDE FOR MALE SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual assault can happen to anyone. In the state of Colorado 1 in 17 men has experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault (Colorado Department of Health, 1998). Most often, the assailant and the victim know one another. There is a common cultural idea that sexual assault cannot happen to men, and that they are always the ones responsible for the assault. It is estimated that men are about 1.5 times less likely than women to report a sexual assault by a male perpetrator to law enforcement.

What is Sexual Assault?

- Sexual assault is any sexual contact without consent* and may include touching of intimate body areas, intercourse or penetration.
- A violation of a person’s physical and emotional well being.
- A crime prosecutable under Colorado law.
- An act of power and control.
- Sexual assault is NOT an expression of love, passion, or sexual desire.
- Sexual assault is NOT your fault.

* Consent: cooperation in act and attitude, this means that the persons involved must say “Yes” using both actions and words. If “No” is never said, consent has not been given. Each party must be aware of what is happening and give consent upon free will. If the victim is under the influence of alcohol or drugs to the point where they cannot make decisions, consent CANNOT be given, nor can consent be given by sleeping or unconscious persons. Consent can be taken away at any point in time.

Many men will experience the following after a sexual assault:

- Anxiety
- Denial
- Depression
- Fear of How Others Will View Their Sexuality
- Fear of Negative Judgment
- Fear of Reprisals from the Offender
- Feeling of Inadequacy as a Man
- Feelings of Shame
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

What if it has Happened to Me?

1. Take the necessary steps to ensure your safety.
2. Call a rape crisis provider or victim advocate. There are 24-hour confidential advocates available both on campus (Victim Assistance Team, 970-491-7111) and in the community (SAVA, 970-472-4200). Your advocate will explain to you what choices, resources, and courses of action are available and support you as you walk through them.
3. Talk with someone you trust.
4. Do not shower or bathe after the assault. You may or may not choose to report the assault, but you may not have a second chance for physical evidence to be collected once you have bathed.
5. Seek medical care.
6. Decide whether or not you want to report the assault to law enforcement. Reporting the assault is not the same as moving forward with prosecution. You will be notified and have input at every critical stage of the investigation and/or process. Your advocate will support you in your decision and can remain with you through many phases of the reporting process if you choose.

**HEALING FROM TRAUMA**

Healing can begin at many starting points and everyone’s journey is different. With many survivors breaking the silence, we have learned that there are shared reactions and experiences as survivors heal from the trauma. It is important to find someone to talk to about your experiences and feelings, either someone you know and trust, or a counselor.

*What lies ahead? The five stages of healing:*

**Stage One: Initial Shock**
- Shock following an assault can take on many forms. You may experience emotional as well as physical shock, which could be exhibited in controlled and withdrawn behavior, or highly expressive behavior such as crying, screaming, or shaking. You may not be comfortable expressing these feelings to others.

**Stage Two: Denial**
- Also called pseudo-adjustment, this stage may find you attempting to go on with your normal routine, wanting to forget about the assault. This denial or rationalization of what happened is an attempt to deal with inner turmoil and return to normal life.

**Stage Three: Reactivation**
- This stage involves a re-experiencing of the feelings from Stage One, usually brought on by the triggering of memories of the assault. Feelings of depression, anxiety and shame may increase. Other symptoms can include nightmares, flashbacks, and a sense of vulnerability, mistrust and physical complaints.

**Stage Four: Anger**
- You may experience feelings of anger—often toward yourself, friends, significant others, society, the legal system, all men/women, etc. With skillful support this anger can be redirected in ways that are healing.

**Stage Five: Integration (Closure)**
- As you integrate the thoughts and feelings stemming from the assault into your life experience you will begin to feel “back on track.” As a result of support, education, and the passing of time, you will feel strengthened.

*Help Healing From Trauma*

After experiencing a traumatic event, such as a sexual assault, you might find yourself reacting to situations in ways you would not have before the assault. You may feel numb, like the whole world is just floating by. Or, you may have memories that are so strong you find it difficult to stay in the present moment. These strong memories are called flashbacks, and they can be triggered by a thought, smell, color, or anything that reminds you of the attack.
If you have a flashback, try grounding yourself and reentering the present moment using sensory techniques:

- Focus on the present (not the trauma).
- Take 3 slow, deep breaths.
- Try doing an activity that changes your current experience in any of your five senses:
  - Sight: Name 5 things you see in the room.
  - Taste: Drink something hot or cold, eat some strong tasting candy, or suck on ice.
  - Touch: Run your hand across something highly textured, or pet your dog.
  - Smell: Use scented candles, lotion, bubble bath, aromatherapy, or food.
  - Hear: Listen to music, someone’s voice, or any noise happening around you (cars, barking, etc)

Sometimes you may be in the present moment, but just thinking a lot about the assault. The most important pieces of healing from trauma are to be gentle and patient with yourself. When you need some extra comfort you might:

- Turn on music, light candles or incense, and run yourself a warm bath.
- Drink hot tea or hot chocolate.
- Go to a special place (actually or in your mind).
- Hug a stuffed animal or a person who makes you feel safe.
- Cry.
- Use art, journaling, or other creative outlets.

At other times you might need to just get your mind off the assault, and that’s okay too. You can watch TV, clean the house, go for a walk, or play cards with a friend. Just know that healing from trauma is possible. It will get better with time.

**Coping and Self-Care**

Coping mechanisms can also be described as **Survival Strategies**. Every survivor needs a toolbox of coping strategies to help with flashbacks, memories and the hard days where anxiety, depression and other feelings seem overwhelming. Some coping strategies are healthy (exercising, eating comforting foods in moderation, spending time with safe people, seeking out counseling, etc.) and some are not (self-harming, consuming alcohol or drugs, attempting suicide, promiscuous sexual activity, etc.).

Positive coping and self-care is incredibly important in the healing process. Below are some suggestions for taking care of yourself from the Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN). More information can be found on their website [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org).

**Physical**
- Food is a type of self-care that is often overlooked. Make sure that you are getting adequate nutrition, and let yourself have a few favorites in moderation!
- Exercise! Exercise has been found to help combat feelings of sadness or depression.
- Make sure you are getting 7-10 hours of sleep each night.

**Emotional**
- Counseling. This could mean seeing a psychologist, social worker, or therapist, or speaking to someone on a crisis line. You will find resources at the end of this document.
• Keeping a journal. Some survivors find that recording thoughts and feelings in a journal or diary helps them manage their emotions.
• Connecting with others. Nurture relationships with people who make you feel good about yourself and make it a priority to spend time with friends and family. Consider joining a support group for survivors.
• Relaxation techniques or meditation. Here is one to try: Sit or stand comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor and your back straight. Place one hand over your belly button. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and let your stomach expand as you inhale. Hold your breath for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, sighing as you breathe out. Concentrate on relaxing your stomach muscles as you breathe in. When you are doing this exercise correctly, you will feel your stomach rise and fall about an inch as you breathe in and out. Try to keep the rest of your body relaxed—your shoulders should not raise and fall as you breathe! Slowly count to 4 as you inhale and to 4 again as you exhale. At the end of the exhalation, take another deep breath. After 3-4 cycles of breathing you should begin to feel the calming effects.

Leisure
• Find time to do activities you enjoy.
• Get involved in a sport or hobby. Join a group and connect with others!
Office of Women’s Programs and Studies - Serves all people regardless of gender  
PH: (970) 491-6384  
Trained Advocates are available to provide emotional support and information to survivors, male or female, of sexual assault, stalking, childhood sexual abuse, or domestic violence. Advocates are volunteers (students, staff, and faculty) who complete an extensive training program. They understand the complexity of the aftermath of sexual assault and can assist students in making decisions and obtaining resources. They are educated about legal, university, medical systems, and the psychological ramifications of sexual assault. Calling for an advocate does not obligate reporting anything to the police.

Victim Assistance Team  
PH: (970) 491-7111 *ask to speak to an advocate  
Trained Advocates are on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide confidential emotional support and information to survivors of sexual assault. Advocates are volunteers (students, staff, and faculty) who complete an extensive training program. They understand the complexity of the aftermath of sexual assault and can assist students in making decisions and obtaining resources. They are educated about legal, university, medical systems, and the psychological ramifications of sexual assault. Advocates can help you navigate decisions about reporting to police or university authorities. Ultimately, the decision is yours unless there is an identifiable threat to another person.

Medical Concerns - Hartshorn Health Services  
Medical Clinic (970) 491 – 7121  
Taking care of medical concerns is an important part of the recovery process for survivors. Medical options to consider include: medical evaluation and treatment, and medications to lower the risk of contracting and/or treatment of STDs. In addition, if you decide to report the sexual assault, police may authorize a medical forensic examination, which must be performed at the local emergency room. Usually a forensic exam is only an option for 72 hours after a sexual assault.

Emotional Healing - CSU Health Network Counseling Services  
PH: (970) 491 – 6053 After Hours: (970) 491 – 7111 *ask to speak to a UCC counselor  
The CSU Health Network Counseling Services offers a number of programs including individual therapy and 24-hour emergency services. These services are free of charge for students. Call or stop by Aylesworth Hall to speak with a counselor.

Academic Concerns  
When you are healing from abuse, it is important to be patient and gentle with yourself. If you are having trouble concentrating and fulfilling your academic commitments, contact an advocate in the Office of Women’s Programs and Studies about your options.

Legal Options  
Choosing to report sexual assault crimes is not an appropriate option for everyone, and a trained advocate can help you navigate through your options. Investigations are often very difficult, long, and painful processes for survivors. Some survivors find they want to seek resolution through the legal system, and others do not. Deciding to report does not mean agreeing to testify; a survivor can always make the decision about testifying later. In Colorado, victims don’t “press charges” – they are considered witnesses to a crime. They can decide not to participate at any point in the investigation and, upon choosing to make a police report, have rights as a crime victim under Colorado law.
An investigation can take from several weeks to several months. When the investigation is complete, it will be sent to the District Attorney’s Office for a decision about filing charges. The victim has the right to be informed about this decision and to share their feelings and wishes with the District Attorney’s office. A victim advocate through the DA’s office will be assigned to each crime victim. This person is an excellent resource for information about the legal process.

**Police Resources**
Police Emergency (on or off campus) – 911  
CSU Police Department - Non-Emergency (970) 491-6425  
Fort Collins Police Department Non-Emergency (970) 221-6540  
Fort Collins TTY (Deaf Accessibility Line) Emergency (970) 221-3490  
Larimer County Sheriff’s Department Non-Emergency (970) 498-5141  
Larimer County District Attorney’s Office Victim/Witness Division (970) 498-7285

**University Disciplinary Options - Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services**
PH: (970) 491-7165  
The Colorado State University Student Conduct Code applies to all students and persons residing on university property. Sexual misconduct, including sexual assault is a violation of the Code of Conduct. If the perpetrator of the crime is a student (or lives in university housing), you may choose to make a report to the Conflict Resolution & Student Conduct Services office. A Hearing Officer may determine there is sufficient reason to conduct an additional investigation into the sexual assault and disciplinary sanctions may be taken against the perpetrator.

**Other Community Resources**
- Childhelp USA’s National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800- 4ACHILD (422-4453)  
- Non-profit agencies such as Sexual Assault Victim Advocate Center in Fort Collins also provide community advocates and counseling to survivors of sexual assault. 24-hour hotline (970) 472-4200; office (970) 472-4204.  
- Medical Center of the Rockies Emergency Room (970) 624-2500  
- National Sexual Assault Hotline (24-hour, confidential counseling and referral service): 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)  
- [www.1in6.org](http://www.1in6.org) helps men who have had unwanted or abusive sexual experiences in childhood live healthier, happier lives. This includes providing resources for people who care about them.  
- [www.malesurvivor.org](http://www.malesurvivor.org) committed to preventing, healing and eliminating all forms of sexual victimization of boys and men through treatment, research, education, advocacy and activism.