

Sexual Assault is NEVER the victims fault!

Response Focus Sheet

- ◆ How can I help?
- ◆ Listen and offer support.
- ◆ Validate whatever the survivor is feeling.
- ◆ Believe her/his story.
- ◆ Do not judge.
- ◆ Respect her/his right to confidentiality.
- ◆ Encourage the survivor to get support.
- ◆ Let the survivor know she/he is not alone.
- ◆ Don't ask too many questions. Let them tell you in their own way, at their own speed.



Who to Call if you Need Help

- ◆ **Emergency Medical/Police Services**
In case of emergency call 911
- ◆ **Non-Emergency Police Assistance**
403-529-8400
- ◆ **Distress Centre – Crisis Line**
Toll-free 1-800-784-2433
- ◆ **Medicine Hat Women’s Shelter**
Crisis Line 403-529-1091
- ◆ **Sexual Assault Response Committee**
For Advocacy, referral, and support
403-548-2717



Sexual Assault Prevention:

What Can We Do?

**SEXUAL
ASSAULT
RESPONSE
COMMITTEE**

*Suite 108, 640 3rd Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 0H5*

PH: 403-548-2717

FAX:403-527-7570

www.mhsarc.com



**SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE
COMMITTEE**
Suite 108, 640 3rd Street SE
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10 Common “Strategies”

These “strategies” have been taught for generations, however, they are false safety practices. By using these “strategies”, we remove the responsibility from the attacker and place it on the victim, causing them to feel guilty and ashamed for not protecting themselves if something does happen. The truth is that the only person who can prevent sexual assault is the person who sexually assaults.

- ◆ Don’t walk alone at night.
- ◆ If you have to walk at night, stick to a well-lit area.
- ◆ Always check the inside of your car before getting in.
- ◆ Have only your first initial listed in the phone book or on your mailbox.
- ◆ Always ask for photo ID before opening the door to a stranger.
- ◆ If you are home alone in the evening, close all blinds and curtains.
- ◆ If a stranger phones, do not let on that you are home alone.
- ◆ Do not accept open beverages from anyone except a server or bartender if you are out at night.
- ◆ At a bar or social event, do not leave your drink unattended.
- ◆ Always go out in pairs or groups, and observe friends for abnormally inebriated behavior.

Assumptions behind these “strategies”

- ◆ Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by strangers.
- ◆ Most sexual assaults occur in places other than a private home.
- ◆ If assaults do occur in a private home, they occur when a stranger breaks in.
- ◆ By restricting their own behavior, women can prevent sexual assault from happening to them.

Why these “strategies” don’t always work

- ◆ Of all women who are sexually assaulted, 69% are assaulted by men they know.
- ◆ Approximately 60% of sexual assaults occur in private homes. The majority of them (38%) occur in the victim’s own home. Another common location is the attacker’s vehicle.

Why these “strategies” are harmful

- ◆ As long as we direct prevention efforts at women, we refrain from looking at the real problem. The behavior of perpetrators is not deterred by prevention aimed at victims.
- ◆ Prevention “strategies” for women create a climate of self-blame for the victim. Such “strategies” reinforce the myth in our society that women are responsible for anticipating and preventing the violent, intentional acts perpetrated against them by people they trust. This leads a victim to question “what did I do wrong?”

What can we do to prevent sexual assault?

- ◆ Believe, take seriously and support survivors who come forward.
- ◆ Understand what consent is and what it is not.
- ◆ Practice healthy communication; be honest and open when talking about sex.
- ◆ Learn about how sexual assault impacts you. With 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men experiencing sexual assault it has probably happened to someone you know.
- ◆ Be aware of images in the media.
- ◆ Recognize the power of language.
- ◆ Speak out! Challenge sexism. Challenge society to make the statement “don’t rape” instead of “don’t get raped”. Hold perpetrators accountable.
- ◆ Get involved! Let your community leaders know that you will not tolerate sexual violence.
- ◆ Sexual assault is a criminal offence listed in the Criminal Code of Canada. Treat it as such; do not minimize, justify, or ignore sexual violence. Hold the offender responsible for their actions.

Sexual Assault:

Any unwanted act of a sexual nature that is imposed on another person.