

Effects of Victimization

A Brief Overview of Possible Effects:

PHYSICAL

- Soreness
- Physical injuries (cuts, bruises, broken bones, etc.)
- Eating disorders
- Sleep disturbances
- Nightmares
- Somatic illness
- Muscular tension
- Venereal disease
- Pregnancy

THOUGHT

- What will people think?
- Will they blame me?
- Will others reject me?
- Why did this happen to me?
- Am I damaged goods?
- Why me?
- What if I had or hadn't done...?
- Confusion
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- If I forget about it, it will go away
- Bad things happen to bad people, good things happen to good people...
- I deserved it because...

EMOTIONAL

- Fear
- Shock
- Sense of unreality
- Numbness
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Embarrassment
- Humiliation
- Powerlessness
- Guilt
- Shame
- Mood swings
- Anger
- Irritability
- Hopelessness
- Despair
- Helplessness
- Low self-esteem
- Sad
- Vulnerable

SOCIAL

- Withdrawal
- Afraid to be alone
- Uncomfortable around other people
- Afraid/nervous in crowds
- Difficulty trusting others
- Hypersensitive when relating to others
- Afraid to leave house (especially alone)
- Less productive
- Difficult time getting things accomplished
- Difficult time relaxing
- Disruption of sexual relations
- Difficulty with intimacy

Rape:

Emotional Reactions:

- Shock – “I feel numb. What’s wrong with me – I’m unable to feel anything?”
- Disbelief – “I can’t believe that this has happened to me.”
- Anger – “I wish he would die. I’m going to kill him.”
- Powerlessness – “I feel totally out of control.”
- Shame/Humiliation – “I’m so dirty. No one will ever want me now.”
- Fear - “I’m going to be killed. He knows where I live. Do I have an STI?”
- Depression – “I can’t go on. I don’t care anymore. I have no one.”
- Flashbacks – “I just can’t stop thinking about it.”
- Guilt – “I must have done something to deserve this. I should have/could have.”
- Denial – “This really couldn’t have happened.”
- Anxiety – “I have no control. I can’t sleep. I don’t feel like eating.”

Reactions to rape may be very intense or they may be very controlled. Unfortunately, many times a victim’s controlled response is misunderstood as a sign that nothing really happened or that the rape did not have much of an effect on the victim.

Acquaintance Rape:

Victims of acquaintance rape may have many of the same reactions as a victim of stranger rape, with many different dimensions:

- Fear of retaliation may be more dramatic or real since the offender may live near the victim or work with the victim.
- Returning to work or school may be more difficult because of possible interaction with the offender.
- Guilt may be more severe because of a prior relationship with the offender.
- Re-establishing trust may be extremely difficult.

Victims of acquaintance rape often suffer serious, long-term psychological effects. Compared to victims of stranger rapes, these victims often blame themselves more, see themselves more negatively, and suffer more serious psychological problems. They often have difficulty trusting people in their relationships. It may take them longer to recover from the attack, particularly if it involved physical violence. Acquaintance rape victims are less likely to seek crisis services, tell someone, report to police and seek counseling.

Acquaintance rape victims feel particularly vulnerable and unsafe, since they have found that even people they trusted can commit an act of violence upon them. Family and friends may not be a source of support for acquaintance rape victims, as they may be for victims of stranger rapes. If they tell friends or family, the severity of the attack may be minimized, or the victim may be blamed for the rape. (Gidycz, Christine A and Mary P. Koss. “The Effects of Acquaintance Rape on the Female Victim.” *Acquaintance Rape: The Hidden Crime*, edited by Andrea Parrot. John Wiley and Sons, 1991.)

FOR MORE EDUCATION OR TO SCHEDULE A PROGRAM CONTACT:

Sexual Assault Peer
Education Team
253-535-8759
sapet@plu.edu
www.plu.edu/~womencen

Men Against Violence Program
Jonathan Grove, Coordinator
253-538-6304
grovejk@plu.edu
www.plu.edu/~mav

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE:

Voices Against Violence Program
Jennifer Warwick, Victim Advocate
253-538-6303
warwicjl@plu.edu
www.plu.edu/~voices