

Myths about Rape

MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES ABOUT RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

MYTH: *a story believed by many people, but which is not always true.*

FACT: *a thing that is known to exist, to have happened or to be true*

If we want to promote and create safe spaces in our homes, communities, workplaces and minds we need to challenge the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors that we all have around sexual violence. To create a safe environment for all South Africans we need to start by looking within and exploring why we believe stories about sexual violence that are not always true.

Here are some myths that people believe about rape and sexual violence. Ask yourself: 'Why do I believe this? Is it the truth? Am I willing to change how I think about rape to enable a safer SA for all?'



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**Rape Crisis
Cape Town Trust**

Myths about Rape

Myth: Many people believe that when a woman says no to sex she means yes.

The truth is that in many cultures a woman is expected to be shy and to resist when a man, even her husband, sexually approaches her. Women need to say no very firmly when they mean it. At the same time men need to listen to even a hesitant no and respect it completely.

Myth: Many people believe that when men get excited about sex, they cannot stop.

This is not true. Most of us know what it is like to get excited to the point where there is nothing we want more than to complete the sexual act. We can all choose to stop. Rapists choose not to stop.

Myth: Men are able to protect themselves and so they cannot be raped.

The truth is that the force used by a rapists to subdue a male victim is often much more violent than that used towards a woman. A loaded pistol remains a threat, no matter what your gender.

Myth: Many people believe that wives cannot be raped by their husbands.

The truth is that in South Africa a woman has the right to say no to sex with her husband.

Myth: Many people believe that women say they have been raped to get revenge on men.

The truth is that reporting rape takes a lot of courage, because people often do not believe a woman when she says she has been raped. Therefore it is highly unlikely that a woman would 'invent' a rape. Women do however withdraw charges. This is often seen as proof of a lie. The truth is that survivors are often threatened and/or bribed into dropping charges, or they may lose their faith in the criminal justice system.

Myth: Many people believe that women dress and behave in a particular way, which causes men to get excited and rape them.

The truth is that it doesn't matter how a woman is dressed. Tiny babies in nappies and women in drab, unrevealing clothes also get raped.

We challenge you to remember that:

- Reporting rape takes enormous courage – survivors do not take such steps lightly
- Rape is never the survivor's fault. Rapists make the choice to rape and they are to blame
- Most rapists are not strangers
- Silence does not mean consent
- Whatever you wear you should feel safe from harm
- Saying "No" to sex truly does mean saying "No" to sex.

Rape is never the survivor's fault. Rapists make the choice to rape and they are to blame.

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