

Why does it matter how I respond?

The victim may not have disclosed the assault to anyone else. Studies have shown that the reactions of the first people told about an assault can determine how the victim views it, and can have a profound effect on whether he or she seeks help.

As a health care provider, you have an opportunity to dramatically facilitate the victim's emotional and physical healing from a sexual assault.

You are in a unique position in relationship to the victim. You are in a position of authority and trust. By naming the abuse, responding in a caring and non-judgmental manner, and respecting their boundaries, you will be providing a powerful corrective experience for the victim.

What do I say?

You will find your own ways of speaking about this issue. The best things to say are often the most simple. Here are a few suggestions:

"I'm sorry that happened to you."

"I believe you."

"It wasn't your fault."

"You didn't deserve to be raped."

"Your feelings are normal."

"You are not alone, this has happened to many people."

"There is help available. Would you like a referral?"

"What can I do that will help you feel safe?"

"You are in control here. Let me know if you need to stop."

Please DON'T say...:

"That's what happens when you drink too much."

"A pretty girl like you, guys just can't control themselves."

"I don't see what that has to do with my exam."

"What's wrong with you? Just relax and let me finish."

"That was a long time ago, it's time to get over it."

One in three women are sexually assaulted.

One in four girls and one in seven boys will experience some sort of

sexual abuse before age 18.

Rape is the most under-reported and most rarely convicted crime in the world.

It is estimated that 90% of all sexual assaults go unreported.

How common is it in Boulder?

Sexual crimes are not limited by geography, class or race.

In 1995, the Boulder County Rape Crisis Team helped over 400 victims of sexual assault; approximately 25% of these victims reported their assault to the police.

17% of college females report being victims of rape or attempted rape in the past year.

7% of college males reported committing or attempting to commit a rape in the past year.

What is a "typical" sexual assault?

The best statistics available report that 90% of victims of sexual assault are female. Since boys and men are less likely to report these crimes, it is possible that more than 10% of victims of sexual assault are male.

98% of perpetrators are male, most of them in active heterosexual relationships.

60-80% of all sexual assaults happen between persons who know one another.

One-third of all sexual assaults occur in the victim's home.

Half of all sexual assaults happen from middle school through college, although there are documented cases throughout the life span.

Alcohol is involved in over 80% of all cases. Other drugs can be an important factor, most recently Rohypnol.

But doesn't the emergency room take care of this?

Since most rapes are not reported, few victims seek medical attention. Victims of sexual assault suffer long term emotional and physical effects, and can have intense reactions even years after the initial trauma.

The purpose of the emergency room visit is to treat any acute injury and gather physical evidence that can be used in any future prosecution.

