



Crime Victims Assistance Center, Inc.  
377 Robinson Street  
Binghamton, NY, 13904

722-4256- Crisis Line  
725-8126- Anonymous text line



# DATING SAFELY

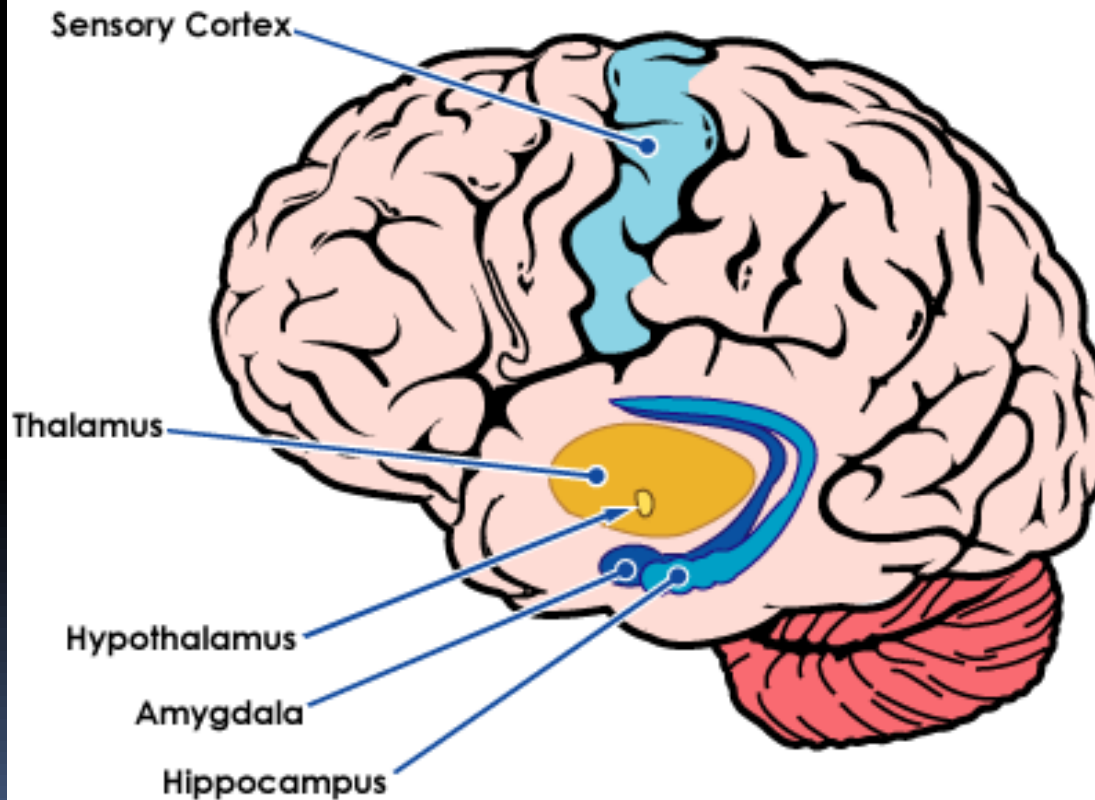
# Sexual Assault Statistics

## 2012 Statistics:

- Broome County Sexual Assaults (PD): 56 (adult)
- CVAC Sexual Assault Response: 112 (adult)
- **73% of sexual assaults** were perpetrated by a non-stranger.
- **9 of every 10** rape victims are female

# The Brain

## Parts of the Brain Involved in Fear Response



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**Thalamus** - decides where to send incoming sensory data (from eyes, ears, mouth, skin)

**Sensory cortex** - interprets sensory data

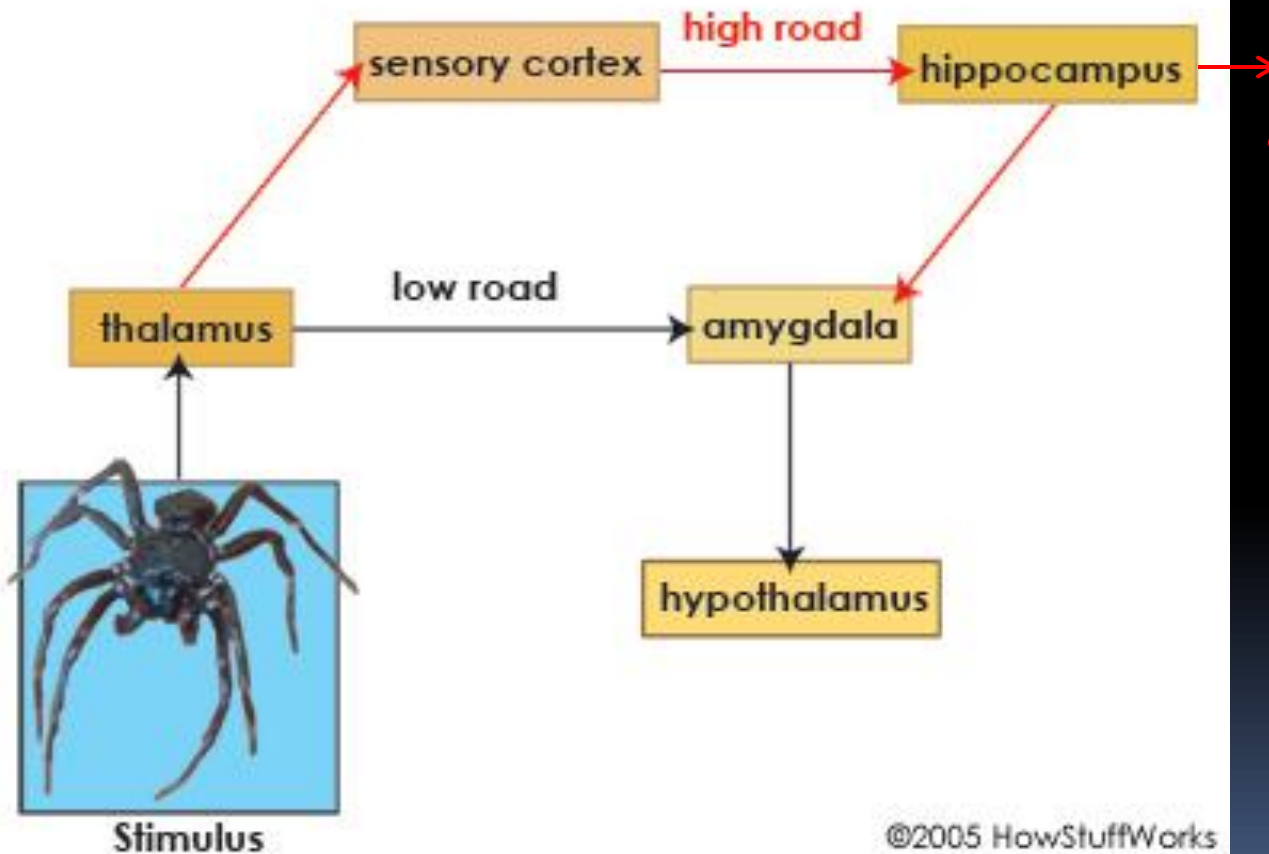
**Hippocampus** - stores and retrieves conscious memories; processes sets of stimuli to establish context

**Amygdala** - decodes emotions; determines possible threat; stores fear memories

**Hypothalamus** - activates "fight or flight" response

# Fear Response

## The Paths of Fear



- Provides context in order to make sense of the situation at
- Forms long-term memories

Both the hippocampus and the amygdala are **VERY** sensitive to hormonal fluctuations.

# Physical Fear Responses

- Heart rate and blood pressure increase

- Pupils dilate

- Veins in skin constrict

- Muscles tense up

- Non-essential systems shut down

- Smooth muscles relax to let in more O<sub>2</sub>

- Trouble focusing on small tasks (brain is directed to focus only on big picture in order to determine where threat is coming from)



# Chemistry of a Sexual Assault

- During a traumatic event, the hypothalamus tells the pituitary gland to release chemicals into the body:
  - Adrenaline: Fight or flight
  - Opiates: Physical pain
  - Cortisol: Suppresses immune system, turns glucose into energy, signals brain to repair tissue

# Chemistry of a Sexual Assault

Adrenaline  
(catecholamines)

- Impairs Rational Thought

Opiates

- Flat Affect

Cortisol  
(corticosteroids)

- Impairs memory retrieval

# Tonic Immobility

- Autonomic (uncontrollable) mammalian response in extremely fearful situations
- Increased breathing, eye closure, **paralysis**
- 12-50% of rape victims experience TI during an assault.
- Evolutionary response that is not very helpful to humans.
- Chances to experience this increase dramatically to victims of repeated abuse



# Triggers

Seeing, feeling, hearing, smelling something that reminds us of past trauma.

The response is as if there is current danger.

Thinking brain automatically shuts off in the face of triggers.

Past and present danger become confused.

Activates the alarm system...  
(PTSD Symptoms)




# Portrait of a Perpetrator

- Not all rape is JUST about power and control. Sometimes, it is about a pervasive need/drive for sexual gratification.
- Many times the perpetrator feels like the victim, because in their mind, they did nothing wrong (other than being challenged or caught). Victims self-blame, second guess themselves and in general... *act more guilty.*

# Rape Culture/Perpetrator Behavior

- Stalking/predatory behaviors
- Inappropriate comments –sexist behaviors
- Highly sexualized – sexually hyper-masculine
- Exploiting vulnerabilities of others
- Media normalization



- 
- What does the general public expect to see in a sexual assault case in order for them to not place blame on the victim?

# What are the popular beliefs/myths?

- Certain behaviors such as drinking or wearing sexually suggestive clothing make a woman more responsible for a sexual assault.
- Women who don't fight back (shout, kick, scream, etc.) have not been raped.
- Rape affects very few people because no one I know personally has been raped.
- There is a "right way" to respond to a sexual assault.
- Most women lie about acquaintance rape because they have regrets about consensual sex.

# Why Victims Are Ashamed to Tell

- There is a society bias against rape victims. Fear of sex & anything sexual.
- Victim accounts may change their story to fit the mold of what society (law enforcement, friends, family etc.) thinks it should be.
- Guilt, denial and societal beliefs make it very difficult for her to hold perpetrator ultimately responsible.

# Why Victims are Ashamed to Tell

- afraid of being 'outed'
- everyone will know & judge them
- Afraid they won't be believed
- believe nothing will happen to the perpetrator
- don't want to go through it without guarantee of punishment ensuing; not worth telling if nothing will happen

- Bill and Mary attended a party that a mutual acquaintance threw on Friday night. They did not know each other previously, but met that night at the party and visited throughout the evening. Bill noticed Mary had drunk quite a bit of alcohol, so he thought he would offer her a ride home. Besides, he thought she was quite attractive, especially in the sexy outfit she had worn to the party. Mary accepted Bill's offer to drive her home. When they got to Mary's apartment building, Bill walked Mary up to her apartment and gave her a kiss goodnight. Mary invited Bill into her apartment "to watch a movie." Bill accepted, so Mary put in a movie for them to watch. Neither of them was actually watching the movie; instead they were kissing, touching, and stroking each other. Mary told Bill she did not want to have intercourse but was enjoying making out with him. Later Mary felt Bill's penis penetrate her vagina. She told him to stop, but he did not.



# The “Uncooperative” Victim

- The victim may genuinely fear loss and an uncertain future if they cooperate with prosecution. For example, the victim may reasonably or irrationally fear:
  - Loss of the relationship
  - Retaliation by friends or family
  - Retaliation of the perpetrator
  - Loss of custody
  - Loss of income, the home, or other assets
  - Loss of reputation



# Statistics

## Sexual Assault Numbers

In 2007, there were **248,300** victims of sexual assault.

**Every 2 minutes** someone in the U.S. is sexually assaulted.

[Learn more sexual assault numbers](#)

**1 in 3 college women will be the victim of a sexual assault during her academic career.**

- At least 75-80% of all sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance of the victim.
- College age women are 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted.  
(RAINN)
- 48.8% of college women who were victims of attacks that met the definition of rape did not consider what happened to them to be rape.

# More Statistics...

- **35% of college men** who voluntarily participated in psychological research conducted at several universities indicated they might commit a rape if they knew they could get away with it.
- • In a survey of high school students, **56% of girls and 76% of boys** [some of whom may be incoming college freshmen] believed forced sex was acceptable under some circumstances.

# Consent...

- Consent is ACTIVE, not inactive.
- To alleged perpetrator: Was consent given?
  - This needs to be a YES or NO answer.
- Consent is not implied. It is not given through a look or through previous sexual contact. It is an affirmative answer.
- Consent CANNOT be given (under NYS law) if the person is intoxicated.

# New York State S.A. Law

- *Under New York State law, a sexual offense occurs when certain sexual acts are perpetrated against a victim without his or her consent. The law defines both (1) the behavior and the physical nature (body parts, etc) of a sex offense and (2) the lack of consent involved.*

"Lack of consent" is defined in New York State's Penal Law as occurring in the following circumstances:

## ***Forcible Compulsion:***

- actual physical force.
- the threat of physical force, expressed or implied, that puts the victim in fear of being physically harmed or another person being physically harmed (e.g. one's child).
- the threat to kidnap the victim or a third person.

# New York State S.A. Law

- **OR *Physically helpless***: physically unable to indicate a lack of consent (e.g. because victim is unconscious or because of a physical disability that makes one unable to physically or verbally communicate lack of consent).

***Under 17 years of age***: New York law states that a person less than 17 years of age is legally incapable of consenting to sexual intercourse or other sexual contact. These laws are typically known as statutory rape laws

- ***Mentally Incapacitated, mentally disabled, Inmate, OR***
- ***Some Factor Other Than Incapacity to Consent***: Rape 3 and Criminal Sexual Act 3 have recently been modified with a "no means no" clause. In cases of intercourse only, if the victim expressed that he or she did not consent to the sex act in such a way that a reasonable person would have understood those words or acts as expressing lack of consent

# The Aftermath...

- Go somewhere where you are safe. Before anything else happens, your safety should be your first priority.
- *Seek medical treatment.* Seek medical attention for any injuries, for the morning after pill, std baseline, SAFE exam, HIV prophylaxis
- It is imperative that you get to the Emergency Room so you can make sure you are physically well.
- It is your right to have an advocate present to let you know what your options are and to be there for you during your sexual assault forensic exam (SAFE Exam).


# Aftermath, cont.

- If the crime occurred in your home, try not to disturb the scene.
- There may be evidence that is useful in prosecuting the perpetrator here as well.
- Do not shower, change your clothes, brush your teeth, eat, smoke, wash your hands, or drink.
- Doing these things may result in lost evidence that could help you bring the offender to justice.





# Forensic Windows

- Forensic Exam: up to 96 hours (for adults).  
Kits legally held for 30 days
  - HIV Prophylaxis: Most effective within 12 hours, have seen drugs given up to 48 hours later
  - Morning after Pill: can be taken up to five days after sexual encounter
- 




# Basic Advocacy

- Evaluate the situation; obtain a clear understanding of the nature and extent of what's happening.
- Allow the victim to vent emotions and become less confused by helping to clarify the event that caused them to come to you.
- Let the victim discuss reactions to the event/situation as well as fears or doubts.
- Explore solutions and the acceptability of alternatives.
- Help the victim decide on an acceptable action plan (or safety plan), keeping in mind that deciding to do nothing also is a decision, and must be supported.
- Encourage action through **supportive, nonjudgmental behavior.**

# Basic Advocacy, cont.

- *How you are* is the most important aspect of the support process.
- Listen in a way that supports and validates.
- Do not try to redefine the situation as being more or less critical than the victim sees it.
- The victim's situation may require them to be connected to vital community resources. Make sure you get them to the right place, if they aren't ready (crisis line)
- BU, IPV Program



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*Please e-mail me for more information or to receive a  
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