



This booklet has been designed to assist survivors of rape and sexual offences, the families and friends of survivors, emergency workers, social workers and any personnel needing a handy reference guide.

The iThemba Rape and Trauma Support Centre will offer unconditional counselling and support. All information and subsequent data will be kept in the strictest of confidence at all times, and the privacy of the rape survivor will not be breached.

**All services are FREE, confidential, and available to people of all ages, race and gender.**

- We believe that the survivor is never to be blamed for an assault against him/her.
- We are here to assist the survivor in the process of recovery.
- We can act as a personal link between the survivor and law enforcement officials, medical personnel, mental health care professionals and other agencies or services that may be involved in assisting the survivor.
- We ensure that the survivor gets the information he/she needs, that the survivor is listened to, and that the survivor is treated with the sensitivity and respect he/she deserve.

### **Contact us:**

(011)422-4107  
26Bunyan Street Benoni  
[www.traumasupport.org.za](http://www.traumasupport.org.za)  
Email-[info@traumasupport.org.za](mailto:info@traumasupport.org.za)

*Compiled by Philip Stoneman*

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## **What is a sexual offence?**

A Sexual offence involves sex without consent, unwanted sexual touching, or being forced to engage in humiliating sexual activity.

No one has the right to force you into sexual activity, no matter what your relationship with this person is. This means no-one can force you to have sex, or touch you in a sexual way without your consent, or force you to perform sexual activity you find unpleasant or humiliating. Remember - a sexual assault is NOT your fault.

## **Prevention: Keeping yourself safe ([www.saps.org](http://www.saps.org))**

Here are a number of suggestions you can use to try and prevent rape.

### ***Vulnerability increases –***

- in dark and deserted places at night;
- if you look vulnerable (e.g. walking alone in desolate areas);
- if you appear uncertain, for example if you do not know where you are going;
- if you do not lock your car doors and close your windows; if you talk to strangers; if you stop for stranded vehicles or people;
- or if your vehicle is faulty and you have to stop for help.
- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Be alert at traffic lights and stop streets. Walk close to the curb and face the on-coming traffic.
- Try and keep to well-lit areas or where there are people.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- Keep a whistle with you - and blow it if you need help.

### ***At home***

- Do not allow a stranger into your home - even if he is delivering something or providing a service.
- Ask for an identity document or phone his/her office to check his/her identity.
- If you can, invest in the best locks and security you can afford.
- Never tell anyone that you are alone at home - and make sure the children also know not to do so.
- Know your neighbours - and together plan ahead for how you will respond in a crisis.
- Know your local police station - and discuss safety matters with the police.
- Become involved with local crime prevention efforts with the community police forum or police.

### ***On a date***

- Do not allow anyone to touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable be firm and clear and say NO!
- Do not leave a party or social event with someone you do not know or have just met - say NO!
- Ask friends for help if someone ignores you when you say NO!
- Remember: most rape victims know the rapist.
- You have the right to say NO!
- DO NOT LEAVE YOUR DRINK UNATTENDED – ALWAYS WATCH THE BARMAN POUR YOUR DRINK.
- Be firm and clear and say NO!
- Do not leave a party or social event with someone you do not know or have just met - say NO!
- Ask friends for help if someone ignores you when you say NO!
- Remember: most rape victims know the rapist.
- You have the right to say NO!

## ***In case of a rape***

- Try not to panic.
- Common sense is your best defense.
- You cannot always defend yourself and your resistance may cause serious injury.
- If the attacker is dangerous, cooperate and try to negotiate.
- Submission is not consent.
- Try and remember what the attacker looks like - his age, race, height, hair colour, scars, tattoos, clothes, voice, jewellery.
- Scream, yell, blow your whistle or run away if you possibly can.
- Do not bath or change your clothes after an attack
- Keep all the evidence so that it can be used by the police for further investigation.
- Report the crime to the Police Service straight away: go to the police station or phone 10111.

## ***After a rape:***

### **Get to a safe place.**

Every victim of rape responds differently - but it is likely that you will benefit from help.

- You may feel dirty and want to wash repeatedly;
- You may feel scared and afraid to go out;
- Or that it is your fault and that you are guilty;
- or you cannot sleep, have nightmares, cannot eat, cannot stop crying
- or that you want to forget it as quickly as possible and get on with your life.
- None of these responses are unusual or unnatural
- Remember that there is always someone to help you.
- Contact a police station, 10111, emergency services,

**Or Contact our centre:**

**(011) 422-4107**

**Control centre: 425-4933**

## What happens when you report a sexual offence?

1. When a rape survivor reports a sexual or indecent assault to the South African Police Services,
  - Statements are taken by uniformed police officers and a case is opened.
  - A detective from the FCS unit is then contacted to investigate the case further; the police official will take your statement.
  - You need not be alone - a friend or family member can be with you while you make your statement, as long as he or she is not a potential witness in your case.
  - If you later feel that your statement is wrong or incomplete, you can make another statement.
  - You can make your statement in your own language (if it may be translated).
  - You have the right to copy your statement. It may sometimes not be possible to get a copy immediately, but then you will get it later.
  - The police official will give you a case number and you must use this number whenever you want information about your case.
  - If necessary, the investigating officer will make sure you are examined by an accredited health care worker, who will complete a medical report and collect medical evidence
  - You must make sure that the investigating officer knows how and where to contact you at all times, including when you move to another location, but it is a victim's responsibility to notify the police official of any changes in address.
  - The investigating officer will let you know:
    - ❖ When the suspect is arrested,
    - ❖ if the suspect is released on bail
    - ❖ if you need to attend an identification parade
    - ❖ the date of the trial
    - ❖ when you will have to give evidence
    - ❖ the outcome of the case
  - A victim must have the responsible police official's telephone number so that he/she knows where to get information about his/her case.
  - The police investigate the case and then hand it over to a state lawyer called a prosecutor. (The service is free to you.)
  - The police official, the investigating officer and the prosecutor will be able to give you information about your case.
  - Get a telephone number from the investigating officer so that you know where to get information about your case.

**“I wanted to get control back. Taking care of my body was the first step for me.” *30-year-old rape survivor***

## What about the way I feel?

([www.barcc.org](http://www.barcc.org))

### ***Emotional concerns:***

Healing emotionally after rape can be a complex process. One of the most important things you can do to help yourself is to get as much support as possible. People react and cope differently after being raped, so it is important to respect your choices and individual style of coping. At the same time, many rape survivors find it helpful to know that some emotions and reactions tend to be very common. These reactions can be very confusing and upsetting, but they are normal in your situation. Some of the common reactions and emotions people have are:

### ***Guilt.***

Many survivors of rape feel guilty. We live in a culture that tends to blame the victim of rape. No one deserves to be raped, even if they drink to excess, dress in revealing clothing, or consented to other sexual activity like kissing. Remember, being raped is never your fault.

### ***Fear.***

It is normal to feel afraid after being raped. Rape is frightening. Some survivors find it hard to be alone at night or in a setting that is like the one in which they were raped.

### ***Avoidance.***

It is common to avoid or want to avoid anything that has to do with the assault. Many survivors also avoid getting assistance because it reminds them of the assault. Although avoidance can initially assist in coping, most survivors find it is not a long-term solution.

***Anger.*** You might feel angry — with the rapist, people you love, yourself, or the world. Feeling angry can be an important part of healing emotionally after a rape.

***Mood swings.*** Your mood may change rapidly or dramatically. Coping with a sexual assault is overwhelming, and these kinds of intense reactions are normal. Most survivors experience a lot of ups and downs in their healing process.

### ***Distrust.***

It may also take a while to feel like you can trust people again. If you were raped by someone you knew, you may feel like you've lost confidence in your sense of judgment about other people. If you were raped by a stranger, you may feel like you can't trust people you don't know.

### ***Loss of control***

Survivors of rape often feel out of control or powerless. They have been robbed of control over their bodies. One of the most important facets of emotional healing from this experience is regaining control.

### ***Numbness.***

Sometimes it takes a while for survivors of rape to feel anything at all. One of the ways people sometimes cope with crisis is to go numb.

### ***Re-experiencing.***

Many survivors find they have nightmares, flashbacks, or intrusive thoughts about the rape. This re-experiencing can sometimes feel almost as difficult to cope with as the rape itself. These disruptions can also make it difficult to sleep or to concentrate.

**If you are experiencing any of these feelings and want someone to talk to, please call our centre.**

## Supporting a survivor:

How can I help as a family member or friend?

### **Listen.**

Often, a person in crisis needs someone to hear her/his story. You can show you're really listening by nodding, looking her/him in the eye, saying, "uh-huh," etc. Communicate that you believe the survivor.

One of the most important things you can do is to communicate that you believe what the survivor is telling you. Survivors often worry that they will not be believed or have been told by the perpetrator that no one will believe them. Help to clarify what you think the survivor is saying. Listen carefully to the survivor and then tell them what you think they said about their feelings.

The survivor may be talking about her/his emotions in a way that seems jumbled. You can help by sorting out and repeating back what you think was said. Let the survivor decide what s/he wants to talk about. Don't push her/him to talk about something if s/he is not comfortable. If you feel you need to ask questions, ask her/him gently, so s/he doesn't feel that you're prying. Ask general questions, e.g., "Do you want to talk about what happened?" rather than, "How did s/he rape you?" Don't ask accusing questions. The blame for what happened belongs with the perpetrator.

You may feel angry and frustrated at what happened, but don't take it out on the survivor. Survivors do the best they can in confusing, terrifying, or life-threatening situations.

Don't make decisions for the survivor. The experience of rape or sexual assault is one of having power and control completely taken away. You can help a survivor regain power and control over her/his life by letting the survivor make her/his own decisions about what to do next.

Help the survivor get information on what all of the options are, but let her/him make the decisions. Show that you care. Remind the survivor that you care, and that this crisis hasn't changed that fact. You can show your affection by hugging the survivor, telling the survivor that you love her/him, or even just sitting quietly together. You may not feel that you're doing much, but your presence will mean a lot!

Remind the survivor to have compassion for herself/himself. S/he has been through a very difficult experience. Remind the survivor that now s/he needs to be good to herself/ himself. Encourage the survivor to do something nice for herself/himself every day. S/he may criticize herself/himself for not recovering fast enough.

Remind the survivor to give herself/ himself credit for each step toward recovery and that struggles are a normal part of recovery. If someone you care about has been raped or sexually assaulted, you have been affected by the rape/sexual assault as well. You may feel pain, frustration, guilt, anger, confusion, or a variety of other emotions. You may not know exactly how to deal with the situation. It is important to remember that you are one of the most valuable resources for the survivor. Your support will show the survivor that s/he is not alone as s/he recovers. Here are some general guidelines for helping:

You may wish you could make the survivor's pain go away it is extremely difficult to see someone you care about in pain. No matter how helpful you are, though, you can't make the rape disappear. The best thing you can do is to help the survivor find ways to help herself/himself.

It is important to recognize your own limitations every individual has a limit to how much he or she can give. If you try to do more than you are emotionally capable of doing, you will not be able to help effectively. Think realistically about what you can and can't do. Then tell the survivor clearly the ways you think you can help.

If there are things you feel you can't do, you can help her/him to find other sources of support. Be aware of your own reactions to the rape you may feel powerless and out of control of the situation, just as the survivor does.

Often, the survivor's friends and family become more sensitive to violence, safety issues, dynamics between men and women, etc. You can use your own reactions to understand how the survivor may feel.

Sometimes you may be tempted to do things that may make you feel better, but that may not be helpful for the survivor. For example, if you are worried about the survivor's safety, you may push her/him to report so you don't have to be concerned.

However, s/he may feel that talking to the police will make her/him feel too vulnerable. Try to distinguish what you're doing to make yourself feel better from what you're doing to help the survivor. At the same time, remember that your needs are important too. You have also lived through a crisis.

Take time to take care of yourself and to be with people who aren't in crisis. Give yourself credit for all the support you are providing.

It is also important for you to have your own support people to talk to. You can talk with friends or family.

We're also available to talk with you about how the rape has affected you and what you can do to feel better.

# Basic guidelines for Emergency Services Personnel

## ***Be compassionate***

Remember, that many paramedics or health care providers have been exposed to so many forms of trauma that without realising it they may come across as not being compassionate. Be more aware as to how you present yourself to the survivor (especially if you are a male)

## ***Survivor first***

- Encourage the person to come directly to the rape crisis centre. If unable to do so, the survivor should go to the nearest police station or request a transfer to a medical facility.

## ***Scene Containment***

If there are no police officers on scene, be aware of evidence lying around that may seem inconspicuous. (e.g.> tissues, cloths, or condoms the perpetrator may have used)

Remember that the survivor will also have evidence on his/her person. Where possible, advise the person not to:

- Change clothes or wash
- Shower, bathe, douche or wipe
- Wash hands or clean fingernails
- Eat, drink or smoke
- Brush teeth or rinse mouth
- Touch or remove anything from the scene of the crime
- Empty the garbage can or bag
- Not to flush the toilet
- If possible not to urinate or defecate.

If the person has to urinate before a urine sample can be obtained, he/she must urinate in a clean jar or container with a lid that can be sealed.

Ask the person to bring with a set of clothes and shoes that can replace the ones currently being worn, as some or all of it might go for forensic examination. If no other clothes are obtainable, the centre will provide the person with a change of clothing.

If the person has already done any of the above, document it and still proceed with the evidence collection.

## **Procedures followed at iThemba Centre:**

### ***Consent***

A written consent has to be signed prior to any testing for HIV. This has to be informed consent and pre-test and post-test implications have to be explained to the concerned individual. All questions have to be answered in a complete manner and the individual has to be supported in his/her decision regarding this issue.

In the event the individual concerned is not of consenting age, or no legal guardian/parent is available, consent can be given by the examining medical officer, or legal representative.

### ***Testing***

Before being prescribed anti-retroviral medicines, the victim has to be tested for HIV.

Prior to doing any HIV testing, the victim has to receive pre-test counselling. This includes:

- What the test involves
- What it means
- What to do if the results are positive
- What to do if the results are negative
- What future implication these test hold in store for the victim.

After the HIV testing has been completed, the victim has to receive post-test counselling. This includes:

- If the results were negative, the victim now has the option of starting to take anti-retroviral medication
- If the results were positive, the victim now has the option of being referred to an HIV/Aids care centre.
- If the results were positive, anti-retroviral medication already being taken needs to be discontinued. The victim needs to know why.
- The future implications of the result, and the impact this will now pose on the victim and his/her family members and friends.

The HIV testing has to be repeated after six weeks, three months and again after six months.

It is very important for the victim to find out what the results of each of these tests are and they need to be fully informed regarding their HIV status.

If the HIV test returns negative each time, it means that the victim did not contract HIV from the sexual assault.

### ***Medico-legal examination***

All rape survivors must be given a brief information session regarding the legal process and the right to lay a charge.

The medico-legal examination has to be done in order to collect evidence to support the survivor's case in a court of law.

Successful maintenance of the chain of evidence will strengthen the survivor's case and ultimately result in successful prosecution of the perpetrator.

The documentation required is a J88, which has to be brought to the survivor by the investigation officer, or the officer in charge of the initial statement taking.

The J88 has to be dated and stamped with the relevant police office stamp. It has to have the name and contact details of the investigating officer. It has to have the case number.

The district surgeon or forensic nurse will do the examination, and this will be done at the Benoni Rape Crisis Centre. The survivor may see a private doctor, but this doctor must be willing to testify in court.

The district surgeon cannot treat the survivor for any other injuries or illness. If it is not an emergency, the survivor can make a follow-up appointment with his/her own doctor for later check-up and treatment.

If the injuries sustained are of a nature that requires immediate emergency treatment, the survivor has to be accompanied to either a provincial emergency department or private emergency department, determined by the survivor medical-aid requirements.

After the examination the survivor can have a hot shower, and change into clean clothes. The centre will provide Clothing and bathroom necessities if the survivor has no one to bring clean clothes.

## ***Administration of prophylactic medication***

Anti-retroviral medicines can be administered, and these may reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV.

Ideally these medicines have to be taken as soon as possible. Preferably within the first 72 hours.

These medicines will be administered when:

- ❖ The survivor has been raped or forced to have anal sex.
- ❖ The survivor has been told about how these medicines could stop him/her from becoming infected with HIV.
- ❖ The survivor has been told about the possible side effects of these medicines.
- ❖ The survivor has had an HIV test and have tested negative.
- ❖ The survivor has made his/her own choice regarding the use of these medicines.

Ideally, when the survivor is tested negative, a complete 28-day course of medication, as many survivors have transport problems to and from the centre. The survivor needs to take the full course for all 28 days or it will not work.

These medicines are strong and may have side effects like headaches, tiredness, skin rash, a running stomach, nausea and others. These side effects are usually not serious and will not last long. If the side effects are very unpleasant, the survivor has to see the doctor again for consultation and examination.

If the survivor is older than 14 years, he/she does not need their parent or guardian's permission to have an HIV test. They also do not need permission to take anti-retroviral medicines.

If the survivor is younger than 14 years, either a parent or guardian, the hospital superintendent, or legal representative will have to give consent.

There may be an emergency situation where children under 14 has been raped and need urgent assistance. In these situations, doctors should be guided by the best interest of their patient and their duty to give emergency medical treatment.

## ***Other injuries***

The survivor has to seek medical attention even if he/she does not appear to be injured. He/she needs to find out if any internal injuries were sustained, if he/she was exposed to HIV or Hepatitis (or any other sexually transmitted disease), and in the case of a female survivor, if there is a risk of pregnancy.

## ***Police investigation***

It will always be important to consider the emotional well being of the survivor, and where the survivor is adamant that the incident will not be reported, it has to be handled with the necessary empathy.

The concerned individual is the only person who can make a decision about whether or not to report the incident to the police (persons 16 years and older). Adult survivors over the age of 18 cannot be forced to report the rape to the police. Children under the age of 18 must be encouraged to report the crime to the police.

In terms of the Prevention of family violence act and the child care act, staff have a legal obligation to report sexual abuse in underage children to the authorities.

In terms of the SAPS National Instruction 22/2000, a police officer to whom the sexual assault has been reported may not refer that person to another station or police officer. The police officer contacted must deal with the case appropriately regardless of where the actual incident occurred.

Many SAPS stations have specialized units dealing with sexual assault, regardless of age. This unit is known as the Family violence, Child protection and Sex offences investigation unit (FCS).

It is best to report the incident to the police within the first 72 hours so that evidence such as blood or semen can still be collected. Try not to have the survivor wash his/her body or clothes prior to reporting, as this will destroy important evidence.

When it comes to the actual reporting of the rape, a call will be made to the appropriate SAPS individuals and an officer of the same gender as the rape survivor will be requested to come directly to the centre and take the requisite statement.

If the survivor is too upset to give a detailed and accurate statement, the survivor has the right to complete it the next day.

The survivor has to read the statement over and make all needed corrections before signing it. The survivor has the right to receive a copy of the statement and have it verified.

If the police have a suspect in custody, and the survivor has to identify the person, the survivor has to be escorted to the police station by one of the centre's counsellors. The survivor does not have to touch the rapist, but merely needs to indicate who the suspect is.

## **Counselling**

The counselling involved will be done in the manner of creating a space in which the survivor can find his/her way into life by providing tools and strategies to regain power and by validating the survivor's right to feelings, decisions and intelligence.

After being raped, the survivor needs care and support. The survivor needs to be guided back to obtaining a sense of control and safety in the world. As far as possible, the family and friends should support the survivor in what he/she decides to do, without putting on any additional pressure.

# About iThemba...

## ***Our Vision***

To empower, support and assist survivors of violence and sexual trauma through the process of healing and reconciliation in our community.

## ***Our Mission***

- ❖ To offer support to people affected by trauma.
- ❖ To enable a process of advocacy for these people.
- ❖ To educate and raise awareness about trauma in our community.

## ***Our Aim***

- To offer comprehensive care for rape survivors that includes counselling, treatment for physical trauma, prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases and the careful gathering of forensic evidence.
  - To reduce violence against women through the process of research, lobbying, advocacy and education.
  - To increase public awareness.
- To empower survivors of violence through the process of psychological and legal and emotional support.

## ***Our Philosophy***

The iThemba Rape Crisis and Trauma support Centre will lead the survivor of rape through the correct legal process in a dignified and non-traumatic manner, and will offer follow-up trauma counselling to survivors of crime related incidents.

## ***Our Core Values***

- To encourage the community themselves to take appropriate action in assisting and improving the care given to rape survivors.
- To lead the survivor of rape through the correct legal process in a dignified and non-traumatic manner.
- To offer follow-up trauma counselling to survivors of crime related incidents.
- To respect each other, our clients, survivors of crime and volunteers offering up their time to assist the centre.
- To support each other, encourage openness and learning.
- To encourage the development of new and innovative ideas in order to promote the well being of the centre and all it's employees and clients.

## ***Our Operational Plan***

- To provide a safe and comfortable environment where:
- Rape survivors can undergo the appropriate medical examination by the forensic nurse and have the relevant blood tests done, provide the appropriate SAPS personnel with the necessary information and make a statement without feeling threatened.
- Rape survivors, following all the relevant legal processes, can shower in comfort.
- Anti-retro viral medication can be provided to all HIV negative rape survivors.
- Trauma support is then provided for rape survivors, both immediate and long term.
  
- The survivors of other crime related instances can receive trauma counselling, both immediate and long term. Where possible, Professionals will provide the long term counselling.
- Where trauma facilitation for groups involved in trauma related to crime will be provided.
- To provide trauma facilitation for Emergency Medical Service, Fire Department and SAPS members affected by traumatic events.
- To provide information and support regarding post traumatic stress reactions, acute stress disorder and post traumatic stress disorder.
- To educate the entire community, including schools and businesses, and undertake gender awareness campaigns.

## Bibliography

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- ❖ ❖ [www.barcc.org](http://www.barcc.org)
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