



Security Guidelines For Women

UNITED NATIONS	
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE-KEEPING	
STATION	DATE
TO	FROM
SUBJECT	
REMARKS	

Note

This booklet has been compiled from various sources, including documents provided by UNSECOORD, UNICEF, the United States Department of State, Office of Diplomatic Security, the Joint Medical Service (JMS) and from my various observations and experiences.

Although the advice offered here is addressed to women in particular, men will find that they too will benefit from it and should share this booklet with their spouses and partners.

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Checking security before moving in

When considering renting a new residence at a duty station it is important to visit it after dark, before signing the contract. You may wish to note whether or not the property is set back from the road, whether the street is well lit, whether or not a dark alleyway leads up to the doorway. If the residence is already occupied, ask the tenants (particularly female tenants) for advice on the neighbourhood and how they feel about living there.

Check the front and rear doors to ensure they are sturdy and not hollow where one kick would open it. Ideally, the house should have solid wood external doors. A peep hole and a chain are important and should be fitted. The ground floor windows should either be locked or (if sash windows) should have blocks fitted to stop the window opening more than a few centimetres. Windows on the upper floors which overlook an offshoot or outbuilding roof should also have locks.

Rooms rented on the ground floor represent a much higher security risk because of the ease of access. If you are renting a room on the ground floor, basic security rules including fitting thick curtains are essential. If you are sharing a house with male colleagues, women should be given first choice of the upper floor rooms.

If you are posted in the field and if a security officer is present at your duty station do not hesitate to ask him/her to conduct a Residence Security Survey. In some countries this is a requirement before renting a residence.

At home

Do not be complacent about your security because you are at home! Your home may be the target of robbers who might harm you during the commission of a crime. You should carefully assess the physical security of your home and make improvements as necessary. Considering the following points will increase your home security:

- Be sure your doors and locks are strong;
- Lock your doors, even if you are home and even if you leave only for a few minutes;
- Make sure your entrance area is well-lit;
- Consider making one area of your home a safe haven – some place where you can secure yourself against attack and call for help. This might be a bedroom with a strong door and a bolt, or possibly a bathroom. Make sure you have a possible fire exit;
- Shades, curtains or blinds should be on every window;
- List only your initials and last name in the telephone directory. If you are posted in the field, do not put your name on a mailbox or on a gate-post. Even though you are living in a safe country do not mention your first name. You should consider using "P. Smith" rather than "Miss Patricia Smith".
- Ensure that valuable items are not left outside and do not leave potential tools for criminals to use against you where they can find them, e.g., if you have a ladder, lock it up;
- Never automatically open your door to strangers;
- If a stranger asks to use your telephone, do not permit him/her to enter. Offer to make the call for the person;
- If at all possible, avoid sleeping with your windows open;

- Don't get on an elevator if there is someone on it who makes you feel uneasy;
- If you are on an elevator and someone gets on who makes you feel uncomfortable, get off at the next floor;
- In an elevator, stand near the control panel. If threatened, hit the alarm button and press as many other buttons as you can reach, enabling the door to open at any of several floors;
- Before hiring staff, do your best to do a background check on the person. Ask for references and check them;
- If you find a servant to be dishonest or a thief, dismiss him or her immediately and escort the person out of the house. Immediately notify all places where the servant may be purchasing on your account (such as stores) that the servant has been fired;
- Do not entrust servants with keys to your residence; if this is unavoidable, have a special key which your servants do not have and use this lock when you are home;
- Ensure that servants know what security measures you want implemented, such as identifying all callers before opening doors; never allowing access to unauthorised visitors without your specific approval; never providing information about you over the telephone to anyone; never discussing your affairs with anyone; alerting you if they see someone suspicious near the residence;
- Your guard must know exactly what you expect of him: what his patrol should include, how often he should patrol and how he should give an alarm in case of trouble. The guard must also know what to do in case he is forced to leave the property by intruders: where he should go and what he should do when he gets there;
- Get to know your neighbours.

TRAVELLING

In addition to the advice contained in the brochure on "Travel Safety Tips":

Observe local customs

Find out as much as you can about local customs before you arrive in a country, and observe them. Be aware of local standards of dress and behaviour. If you travel into developing countries and male-dominated societies, make every effort to dress modestly. In some place, customs based on religious and moral beliefs strongly influence the way the women dress. For you to blatantly break these rules would be considered irreverent and might put you in jeopardy. You can find on the internet a web site dedicated to women travellers which offers advice for nearly every country:
<http://www.journeywoman.com/ccc/default.html>.

Travel light, travel smart

It's a good idea to travel light. As a woman alone, you will be far less vulnerable and much more independent if you're not loaded down with heavy luggage and extra bags. Try to make sure you have at least one hand free at all times.

It's smart to keep your luggage locked at all times. Avoid expensive-looking camera bags. They may only serve to identify you as a wealthy tourist.

Use luggage tags with flaps that hide your name and address from inquiring eyes. Do not mention your private address. Indicate that of your office.

Hotels

- Do not use your first name when checking into your hotel. For example, use "B. Jones" instead of "Barbara Jones". Let the office, your friends and relatives know how you are registered, so if necessary, you may be contacted. To ward off unwanted male attention, especially in some foreign countries, single women may consider wearing engagement or wedding rings and make hotel reservations as if married.
- Never accept a room if the check-in clerk calls out your name or room number. Others within earshot may use this information to try to call you or gain access to the room. Keep room keys out of sight, especially if they are marked with the room number. Do not leave keys with hotel staff. Always keep them with you. If the key-ring is bulky, do not hesitate to remove the key so that you can easily carry it with you at all times.
- If travelling with an associate, do not mention your room number in lifts, restaurants or public places.
- You should avoid staying in rooms on the ground floor or any room that has easy access from outside, such as from a balcony or a fire escape. Book a room that is close to an elevator and away from exits.
- Never open your door to anyone without taking the necessary precautions. Even if your visitor claims to be a member of the staff, you should check with the front desk to verify the person's need to enter your room.
- Do not organise a meeting, no matter how brief, in your room.
- On arrival in the room, if the door is open or unlocked, do not enter. Return to the desk and ask someone to act as an escort.
- Check the room's closets, bathroom and balcony on first entry to be sure it is empty.
- Do not leave the "Please Make Up Room" sign outside the door; call housekeeping instead.
- Never indicate your first name on the breakfast order form to be left outside your door so as not to give away the fact that a single woman occupies the room.
- Consider purchasing a portable rubber door stop to be placed under the room door for extra security against intruders. Systematically use it at night and when taking a bath or a shower.
- Never leave your door open, even if you are just running down the hall to the ice or vending machine.
- Use only the main entrance when you return at night.
- If you are attending a conference, remove your name tag as soon as possible to avoid being identified.

PERSONAL SAFETY

On the street

By considering the following points, you will improve your security while walking.

- As you prepare to go out, check that all the closures on your bags are shut. Put your wallet in a front pocket or under clothing. Carry only the cash you need and divide it.

- Wear comfortable shoes.
- You should always be aware and alert to your surroundings.
- Whenever possible, avoid walking alone at night.
- Walk purposefully and with confidence. Give the appearance that you are totally aware of your surroundings. Criminals tend to avoid people who have this type of demeanour.
- Even if you are lost do not show it. If asking for directions is necessary, ask families or women with children. Phrase the question along the lines of "where is (destination)? I'm meeting my husband there".
- Always keep a safe distance when walking past strangers on the street or in dark areas.
- Do not take short-cuts through isolated areas.
- Carry bags away from the street side.
- Consider carrying a "bluff" purse or wallet to give away.
- Never walk close to buildings, past unlit doorways and alleyways, keep well out from the building to avoid being jumped.
- So that you cannot be surprised by a vehicle, attempt to walk towards the incoming traffic, this way a car or a van cannot draw up behind you.
- Avoid talking to strangers. If a driver pulls alongside you to ask for directions, do not approach the vehicle and beware of the suggestion to "look at this map".
- If someone suspicious is behind you or ahead of you, cross the street. If necessary, criss-cross from one side on the street to the other, back and forth. If necessary enter a shop and pretend you are interested in buying something. By doing so you will look like a potential customer and the shopkeeper will be more amenable to take care of you. If you state that you are being followed or harassed you will be a potential problem and he/she may not assist you.
- If a car approaches and the driver threatens you, don't hesitate to scream and run in the opposite direction of the car.
- Never hitch-hike or accept a ride from a stranger.
- Have your keys ready but do not jiggle them in your hands unnecessarily. This only serves to announce that you are on your way home. Keys should not bear name and address.
- If taken home at night ask your ride to wait until you are safely inside the house/building.

In a vehicle

Being in a vehicle can give you a false sense of security and actually make you a target of hijackers. Following the tips below can improve your security:

- Keep your car in good working conditions. Check the gas gauge before every trip. Make sure you have a flashlight, spare tire, jack and tire iron. Know where you are going and how to get there. Carry a map with you;
- Whenever possible, travel on well-lit, populated streets and thoroughfares. Keep the windows rolled up, except for a small ventilation space, and **KEEP THE DOORS LOCKED**;
- If possible, do not drive alone, particularly at night;
- Be especially alert when you are at a red light or a stop sign. Develop the habit of adjusting driving speed to avoid stopping at traffic lights. Be prepared to drive away, sounding the horn, if you are threatened;

- If you suspect that someone is following you, make a few turns down active streets. DO NOT DRIVE INTO YOUR OWN DRIVEWAY OR PARK IN A DESERTED AREA. If the car continues to follow you, drive to a location where you know you can get help, such as the nearest police station.
- If someone attempts to force you off the road, do not panic. Blow your horn and flash your lights constantly to attract attention. If you are forced over, as soon as you stop, put your car in reverse and back away. Blow your horn and keep the car in motion.
- Never pick up hitchhikers. Think twice before deciding to offer assistance to what may appear to be a stranded motorist, regardless of their sex.

Parking lots

- When parking at night, select a place that will be lit when you return. Check for loiterers before leaving the car. Do not park your car on the street if you have access to a garage or a secure parking area;
- Be especially cautious about vans parked alongside your car, particularly if they have a sliding door and it is alongside the driver's side. It is a very common method of snatching someone off the street and you could be dragged in instantaneously. If you do not feel comfortable enter your vehicle by the passenger's side. This will enable you to keep an eye on the van door and you can lock your door the moment you are safely inside your vehicle.
- Criminals often play on victim's sympathies. Beware of men walking with canes, or limps, requesting help to enter or handle their vehicles (especially vans).
- As you are approaching your car try to see if all your tyres are intact. Tyres can be punctured so that you are forced to stop at some point further on. Also quickly check that no-one is hiding inside your vehicle before you enter.
- Continue to monitor your surroundings and do not turn your back to potential danger while getting into your vehicle. Enter your car by opening your door with your right hand while looking around you.
- As soon as you enter your vehicle, lock the doors and drive off. Do not sit and get organised before pulling out.

Public transportation

Considering the following points will improve your security while using public transportation:

- During off-hours, wait for your train in a designated waiting area;
- Do not ride in compartments of trains that are deserted;
- If possible, sit in the train car that is occupied by the conductor or driver;
- Know the hours of operation of the trains you are using so that you do not need to wait on deserted platforms. Avoid taking the last train to your destination;
- After getting off the bus or leaving a subway station, always look around to see whether you are being followed; and
- Try to have someone meet you at the train station/bus stop or at the lobby of your building if you are coming home late in the evening.
- If you are travelling on a bus, train or metro, sit where you can easily change seats if someone who makes you uncomfortable takes the seat next to you. It is important not to allow the stranger to trap you against a partition or a window.

Taxis

- Once registered at a hotel, keep a hotel business card to show taxi-drivers where to go.
- Do not use unmarked taxis. Try to take a taxi from your hotel or from a taxi stand.
- Always sit behind the taxi driver, not next to him.
- If you talk to the driver stay on general topics. Do not give away personal information.
- Pay the taxi driver while still in the car.

Jogging

- If possible, try to jog with a friend or a colleague.
- Do not wear a walkman. It distracts your attention and may attract would-be thieves.
- Do not jog in deserted parks, wooded and bushy areas.
- Always face incoming traffic.
- Avoid establishing patterns. Vary times and route.

Automated Teller Machines (ATMs)

- Do not select an ATM situated at the corner of a building. Corners create a blind spot near the customer's transaction area. An ATM further from the corner reduces the assailant's element of surprise and increases your effective reaction time.
- At night, select an ATM that is in a well-lighted location. Endeavour to use ATMs during day time.
- Always watch for suspicious persons or activity around an ATM. Have your card ready but take it out at the last minute. Be aware of anyone sitting in a car parked in close proximity to the ATM.
- Be aware of your surroundings throughout the entire transaction. Do not become so involved with your transaction that you are not aware of any changes. If you notice something strange, cancel your transaction and leave immediately.
- Make sure no-one can see you enter your PIN code.
- Once you obtain your cash put it away immediately. Do not stand at the ATM and count it.
- When leaving any ATM location make sure you are not being followed.

Social Situations

You should think of your own personal security even in social situations. You may be particularly vulnerable, as this is one time when you do not anticipate a problem.

Use precaution when meeting someone you don't know well. Arrange to go out with a group of people you know. Choose public places or places where there will be other people;

Speak up! Communicate your wishes clearly. Do not let anyone assume you are going to have intimate relations with him;

Assert yourself. Insist on being treated with respect.

In spite of all the security precautions which are taken, it is possible that you will become a victim. The following section outlines some specific concerns ranging from sexual harassment to rape. The purpose of this information is to increase your awareness and understanding of such issues and provide you with information which may be useful should you or anyone you know be affected by such incidents.

Sexual Harassment

On the Street: How do you cope with this type of behaviour?

You are sitting on a bus. The man opposite is staring hard. His eyes follow you as you get off. You are waiting at a stoplight. A man brushes past, lets loose a mouthful of obscenities and melts into the crowd. You are walking home at night. You hear soft footsteps behind you, footsteps that quicken when yours do.

There probably isn't a woman alive who hasn't had one or more of these experiences. In crowded cities they are often a way of life. "Psychological rape" is the term one sociologist uses to describe these actions – the stares, leers, crude remarks and other behaviour with which men terrorize and intimidate women without laying a finger on them. Emotionally, it can be as destructive as its physical counterpart.

The reaction of women – fear, anger, humiliation, vulnerability – is common. Part of the distress springs from the impersonality of the attack. It is degrading.

How do you cope with stares, leers, muttered obscenities and the like? The only hard and fast rule is **STAY OUT OF DANGER**. If, however, you are reasonably safe, you may consider responding with the following:

- Ignore the advance. If a man is just trying to get a reaction from you and finds he can't, he may stop;
- If you are in a familiar environment, you may consider answering in kind. If a man is trying to shock you with his words, a response in a similar vein may stop him. However, ensure you are not within striking distance when you do this;
- Confront him. If you stop and politely ask, "Were you speaking to me?", the annoying party may feel embarrassed, especially if his acts were based on fear or insecurity;
- Most important, release your feelings of anger and indignity fast and with people you trust so that you can put the incident out of your mind as soon as possible.

At Work: A Checklist for Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment extends to a range of behaviour. In all cases, it refers to conduct which is unwanted by the recipient. It can be defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment is contrary to the provisions of the United Nations Charter and therefore contrary to the policies of the organizations of the United Nations system. A number of organizations have, in fact, adopted informal and formal procedures for dealing with cases of sexual harassment. These may be obtained from local personnel offices. In order to assist you in looking for things which might be signs of sexual harassment, a checklist has been developed by the Working Women's Institute, New York. The basic tactic is to be alert and prepared.

Indications of Sexual Harassment

What is the attitude towards women in your workplace? Are there jokes, comments, graffiti or cartoons that put women down? Are you referred to as someone's "girl" or called "honey" instead of your name?

Are you taken seriously as a worker? Are you treated like someone's daughter, wife, girlfriend, mother?

Are you complimented more for your looks than for your work? Are you told that a job is too dangerous or complicated for you? Are you accused of taking a job away from a man?

Does your supervisor, co-worker, colleague use hugs, pats on your back, arm around your shoulder to make a business-related point? Are sexually suggestive tones, descriptions or body language a part of work-related discussions?

Are you asked questions about your social or personal life or told about theirs? Is there a supervisor, co-worker or colleague known for his "harmless flirtation" or "playboy reputation"? Is there a high rate of turnover among women working for the same man?

Do you hear constant compliments about your clothing, looks, body?

Some common forms of sexual harassment are:

- constant invitations for drinks, dinner, dates;
- close physical contact while you work;
- kisses at office parties;
- receiving lewd cartoons, cards, presents;
- obvious sexual gestures directed at you;
- uninvited visits to your hotel room during out-of-town trips/missions;
- staring at your breasts or other parts of your body;
- touches or grabs at your body;
- sexual invitations or remarks;
- obvious graffiti;
- threats or physical assault;
- subtle or forced pressure for sexual favours.

Some common work-related problems that may follow objections to sexual harassment are:

- sudden criticism of your work;
- no work/too much work/dangerous work;
- denial of training or educational opportunities;
- written up for insubordination or issued warnings;
- pressure to quit;
- inaccurate job evaluation;
- refusal of co-workers to provide training or information;
- denial of increment or promotion.

In facing sexual harassment on the job, remember that each job situation is unique. In deciding what action to take in the short and long term, take time to think about what you want as an outcome and what risks are involved. Make sure that you feel comfortable with the strategies you decide to follow. What works best for someone else may not work for you or in your circumstances.

Do let your objections to the sexual harassment be known as soon as possible. Tell the harasser directly that you do not like what he is doing. How you will phrase it and when you will say it is up to you, but don't ignore sexual harassment – it won't go away.

If the harasser is not your supervisor, discuss the issue with your immediate supervisor, being specific as to the type, time and place of the incident. You may also wish to share your experience with someone in whom you have confidence. This would not only alleviate isolation and self-doubt, and perhaps be a source of helpful advice, but communicating the information to a third party would also help corroborate your statements if a formal complaint is made afterwards. However, until you are certain of what you want to do and what your rights are, don't move too fast or hint at any of your intentions. Trust your instincts and make decisions that make sense for your situation.

It is essential that you document each incident. Keep a personal log or diary of incidents, dates, actual conversations, witnesses. Don't leave it at work. Keep lewd cards, notes, presents; take pictures of graffiti. Voice your objections to the harasser verbally and, if possible, do so in the presence of a witness. Include statements that indicate your discomfort and link it to the comments or behaviour which interfere with your job. Follow this up with some form of written correspondence summarizing this objection. Keep copies for your records. If you have an answering machine/voice mail which provides you with evidence of sexual harassment, keep the tapes.

Get copies of positive work evaluations or other evidence indicating you are doing a good job. Keep copies of reports completed; take pictures of projects completed. Think about the way sexual harassment is affecting you. What combination of emotional/physical/job-related stress symptoms are you feeling? Seek medical attention from a private doctor and have these job-related stress symptoms indicated in your records. If necessary, go up the ladder and make a complaint about sexual harassment verbally and in writing. Keep a record of your correspondence. "Test the waters" for sympathetic co-workers. Find out if other women have experienced sexual harassment.

Rape Awareness

Introduction

The information contained in this part of the document was prepared with the assistance of St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Centre Rape Crisis Programme, New York, New York. The primary goal of this section is to educate you about the issues associated with rape and sexual assault in order to reduce the possibilities of your becoming a victim. Rape is considered the second most violent crime. Homicide is number one. Rape is psychologically devastating, and it can take years for the victim to recover. Only recently has it become acceptable to openly discuss this problem. As a result, misconceptions concerning rape and sexual assault and its victims are being identified and dealt with.

The following terms are working definitions commonly used by professionals who deal with sexual assault. They are not legal definitions.

Sexual assault: Any non-consensual sexual act which is forced by one or more persons upon another.

Rape: Sexual intercourse which is achieved without the victim's consent.

Everyone is a potential victim of sexual assault. Sexual assault is a threat to all women and to a much lesser degree, to men, particularly in situations of armed conflict. Rape and other sexual assaults have

been documented against people as young as two months and as old as 97 years. No one can afford to believe that it could never happen to them. It can.

Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Sexual assault is any sexual act committed against the will of another person. This can include physical force and/or intimidation and coercion. People who force sex on others are not motivated by sex; they are acting out their desire to hurt and control another person.

Most sexual assaults are committed by an acquaintance or relative of the victim. Sexual offenders are not always strangers. Many victims have had some prior contact with their attackers. Sex offenders may be casual acquaintances, neighbours, working colleagues, dates or family members. Knowing the attacker does not make it any less a violent crime.

Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported of all [violent] crimes. Sexual assault is not an infrequent crime. It is just infrequently reported due to, for example, shame, stigma, fear, and lack of trust that anything will happen to the perpetrator.

Tactics Used by Rapists

The sexual assault attack cycle is divided into five parts:

Victim selection: Depending on his motivation, the would-be offender selects his victim. The individual is either preselected or the target of opportunity. In either case, the offender will wait until the potential victim is **VULNERABLE OR ISOLATED**;

Approach the victim: The would-be offender approaches his victim by 1) tricking the victim into accompanying the offender; 2) overwhelming the victim; 3) surprising and attacking the victim;

Initiation of the assault: The offender maintains control of the victim through mere presence, threats, force;

The assault:

The push-off: It is here that the attacker decides whether to further physically punish or kill his victim.

Common Psychological Motivations of the Rapist

No single profile provides an answer to why rape occurs. Opportunity, emotional illness, lust – it happens for all of those reasons, yet often for none of them. Anger is a common thread among all the types of sexual assault. Broadly speaking, offenders fall into four types: anger, power, sadistic and opportunistic rapists.

The **anger rapist** is the most ruthless. Sexual assault becomes a means of expressing and discharging feelings of intense anger, rage, contempt, hatred and frustration; the assault is characterized by excessive brutality. Far more physical force is used in the commission of the offense than would be required simply to overpower and subdue the victim. Sexual assault for this type of offender appears impulsive more than premeditated. Quite often a precipitating stress can be identified which involves a significant woman in the offender's life – his mother, wife, girlfriend. The resulting fury is released and discharged in a sexual assault against a victim who may not be the actual person towards whom the offender harbours such feelings. Sex becomes a weapon, and rape is the means by which he can hurt and degrade his victim and, through her, the significant other. Satisfaction and relief result from the discharge of anger rather than from sexual gratification.

The **power rapist** employs whatever force is necessary to overpower his victim and gain control over her. The offender places his victim in a situation through verbal threat, intimidation with a weapon and/or physical force where she cannot refuse him or resist him, and this provides the offender with a

reassuring sense of power, security, strength, mastery and control. In this fashion, he compensates for underlying feelings of inadequacy, vulnerability and helplessness. Rapes committed under war conditions usually fall in this category.

The assault is usually premeditated and preceded by an obsessional fantasy in which, although the victim may initially resist him, once overpowered, she will submit gratefully. A power rapist may actually look for an easy victim.

The sadistic rapist eroticizes aggression through a sexual assault. The offender derives satisfaction in the abuse of his victim. This assault is deliberate, calculated and premeditated. For this offender, anger and control become sexualized in terms of the offender's finding intense gratification in controlling, hurting and degrading his victim.

Perhaps the most common reason for rape is opportunity. Frequently, the opportunistic rapist carries out the assault during the commission of another crime, e.g., a robbery or car-jacking.

Options for the Victim During an Assault

A rape victim may choose to take any of a number of actions during an assault. In considering what action to take, the victim must take into consideration the type of rapist, the environment and the person's own capabilities. A victim may choose one or a combination of the following options:

Submit: The victims are in fear of losing their lives. The objective here is to survive;

Passive Resistance: Do or say anything to ruin the attacker's desire to have sexual contact with you; and

Active Resistance: Any type of physical force used to fight off the attacker; includes shouting for help, running away or fighting back.

Pros/Cons of Self-defense and Use of Weapons

There are conflicting opinions regarding self-defence and the use of weapons. The following considerations must be borne in mind.

Self-defense techniques require training and practice. It is a personal decision which each staff member must make. It gives you self-confidence and cannot be used against you. It is legal and always accessible.

- **Improvised weapons**: This can be anything accessible. It requires no special training.
- **Mace**: There are local laws regarding the use of mace which must be respected. It requires familiarity and training. Mace has a limited shelf-life. It is not always accessible when you need it.
- **Guns**: It is against U.N. policy for a staff member to carry a weapon unless it is an official part of his/her job. Staff members who decide to have a weapon in their homes must be in compliance with the local laws of the duty station. Use of weapons requires continuous training, and they are not necessarily accessible when you need them. They need to be maintained and carefully stored to avoid accidents. Weapons can give you a false sense of security and could be used against you. It must be stressed that the use of mace or firearms could result in criminal charges and/or a civil claim being lodged against the user even if the individual felt justified in its use.

After an Attack

After a woman is raped, she must make the decision whether to report the crime. If she chooses to do so, in most cases the police will question her very carefully on the circumstances of the event. Sometimes the police are very professional, treat the victim with dignity and respect and explain exactly

why they must ask certain questions. In other instances, policemen have been known to be less sensitive to the victim. The attack should be reported within 72 hours.

After talking to the police, the individual will be taken to a hospital or forensic service for an examination which may help to prove that a rape occurred. It is critical that she try to preserve any evidence of the rape, including clothing. A rape victim should not wash until after she has been examined. Following the examination, she will be provided with treatment for any injuries as well as for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). She may be offered information about preventing pregnancy and/or emergency contraception if the attack occurred within 72 hours. In some locations, information about AIDS may also be provided. Some hospitals may offer counselling; however, this is extremely rare. The section below, entitled Emotional First Aid, will provide some information regarding this. Counselling may be arranged through the United Nations Designated Official or the parent organization of the staff member.

In most cases, if the rapist is caught, the victim can choose to prosecute. If she does, she is in for a long ordeal in the courts. Rape is a difficult crime to prove. During any eventual trial, every effort is made by the defense to exculpate its client regardless of the means. Often this includes delving into the woman's sexual past and bringing out anything to cast doubt on her story. Many victims feel that the trauma of a trial is more than they are willing to risk.

If a woman does not choose to report her rape to the police, one can only guess what happens to her. It is well-known that many women do not report the crime because of the difficulties with the police they have heard about or because they are feeling too guilty, upset, frightened or weak to talk about the rape. Sometimes these women seek help on their own, but they usually keep their experiences to themselves. We would recommend that women identify one person they can trust and with whom they can share their experience and if possible seek professional help and support.

UNSECOORD Stress Management Unit

The UNSECOORD Stress Management Unit is available to provide counselling and support to staff members and their families in case of need. The four professional counsellors who make up this unit also organize and deliver stress management training and briefings and coordinate the stress management-related activities of the United Nations system.

WHO staff are most welcome to contact UNSECOORD in case of need. All requests will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) Treatment for HIV/AIDS

It is estimated that the risk of contracting HIV infection following a sexual assault is less than 1%. However, the risks of being exposed to the virus increase if the woman is assaulted by more than one man or if the assault is perpetrated by an injection drug user or in a high prevalence country, *inter alia*. It is possible to reduce the risk of HIV transmission by taking a Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) Treatment. The PEP kit includes medication, and involves a laboratory test for HIV and counselling. To be as effective as possible, the treatment must be taken within two hours of exposure, and no later than 72 hours following a possible HIV exposure and must be continued for four weeks. PEP kits are available at each duty station.

Stages of Recovery

The emotional impact of rape on its victims was first studied in the 1970s. It was found that most of the victims suffered from an acute stress reaction to a life-threatening situation. While each victim's specific emotional and physical symptoms varied, they fell into a discernible pattern which became known as the Rape Trauma Syndrome. It is virtually identical to Critical Incident Stress.

There are four stages the victim must go through to recover from the experience:

Acute Phase: Disorganization

The woman may experience an extremely wide range of emotions. The impact of the rape may be so severe that feelings of shock or disbelief are expressed. Feelings of fear, anger and anxiety may show through such behaviour as crying, sobbing, smiling, restlessness and tenseness. Alternatively, the woman may be controlled, with her feelings masked or hidden and a calm, composed or subdued demeanour exhibited.

In many cases, the victim is in a state of shock, is simply unable to believe that the attack has happened. Some women experience a detached, super-alert state during or just after the attack. Even while it is occurring they may be memorizing their assailants' physical features or details about his clothing. While this may be a victim's way of distancing herself from the experience, it also has real survival benefits.

During the first several weeks following a sexual assault, the following physical symptoms may be evident:

- Physical trauma from the physical attack;
- Skeletal muscle tension;
- Tension headaches and fatigue;
- Disruption of sleep pattern;
- Irritability; and/or
- Gastro-intestinal problems.

Emotional reactions will also be apparent. Women express a wide gamut of feelings as they begin to deal with the after-effects of rape. These feelings range from fear, humiliation and embarrassment to anger, revenge and self-blame. Fear of physical violence and death may also be manifested.

The victim should be encouraged to talk about the assault as much as possible to her friends and family or, if this would be embarrassing for her, to someone she trusts. As the victim turns from fantasy to handling the realistic problems, there may be a decline in nonspecific anxiety.

Outward Adjustment

The victim appears to have dealt successfully with the experience, but this phase contains a heavy measure of denial and suppression. The victim begins to resume her normal activities, and this healthy response should be encouraged. This is perhaps the most problematic time and the stage most likely to last, because it is heavily dependent on the victim's state of mind prior to the assault and because she is extremely vulnerable to the opinions of those around her. She may feel guilty, blaming herself endlessly for walking down a certain street or acknowledging a greeting. In other words, she turns her anger at the assailant inward.

Long-term process: Reorganization

All victims will experience disorganization in their life-styles following the sexual assault. Various factors will affect their coping behaviour regarding the trauma, e.g., ego strength, social network support and the way people treat them. This coping and reorganization process begins at different times for different women.

The same symptoms are not experienced in the same sequence. This stage is characterized by:

- a need to change residences;
- a need to change telephone numbers;
- nightmares;

- fear of indoors;
- fear of outdoors (seclusion);
- fear of crowds;
- fear of people behind them;
- sexual fears;
- extreme depression;
- anxiety;
- insomnia;
- apathy; and/or
- an almost total inability to function normally.

Resolution

During this phase the victim is able to cope with her trauma and integrate the experience into her emotional make-up. The victim stops wondering "Why did this thing happen to me?" and instead says "Such things happen. It happened, it's over and now I'm going on." She also learns to direct her rage at the assailant and not at herself.

Emotional First Aid

The following section was prepared by St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Centre Rape Crisis Programme as a handout to victims of rape.

Rape and its aftermath can be a nightmare. You must remember that you are not alone. Please read the rest of this page and think about each point. It will help you a great deal. It will be very hard for you. Please try. You owe it to yourself. You deserve help because rape is horrible and no one has any right to do this to you. Please do this for yourself.

- The rape was NOT your fault.
- You are not going crazy – almost any reaction is normal.
- This is a very serious crisis – take very good care of yourself.
- People's reactions may hurt you – they don't understand, and you must not listen to things that make you feel bad.
- You are a victim of a crime.
- You are a good woman.
- You deserve all the help you can get – ASK for it.
- You are not alone unless you cut yourself off.
- You will survive.
- You have every right to cry, scream and be as upset as you feel.
- If you are really afraid that you are going crazy and can't handle yourself, go and get professional care, no matter what anyone says.
- There are people out there who can help you.
- You are a valuable person.
- Do whatever makes you feel better.
- This is the worst thing that's ever happened to you – accept that and act on it.
- You are IN NO WAY responsible for the rape.
- Hang on. Take it five minutes at a time if you have to. Don't let yourself feel overwhelmed.
- Try to let out/get angry at your rapist. Stand in the middle of the room and yell anything you feel like to him as if he were there.
- You are safe, even if you don't feel it. The rape is over.
- Try to find a sympathetic woman/women and talk about it.
- If someone is reacting to your rape in a way that hurts or upsets you, stop him or her or get away from the person. Even if it is your husband/lover/best friend, YOU COME FIRST.
- Find some object (anything that helps) to hold in your hand, if necessary.
- Try to think as clearly as you can about what's good for you and DO IT.
- Make yourself talk about it to as many sympathetic people as you can.
- There is nothing to be ashamed of.

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