

**S**exual Assault, in any form, is a devastating crime. Many factors can influence an individual's response to and recovery from, a sexual assault. Some survivors find they can recover relatively quickly, while others will feel the lasting effects of their victimization throughout their lifetime. Some of the effects of a sexual assault are:

- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**  
(feelings of anxiety, stress or fear)
- **Shock / Denial**
- **Irritability / Anger**
- **Loss of Trust / Social Withdrawal**
- **Loss of Self-Esteem: Guilt, Shame, Embarrassment**
- **Diminished interest in activities or sex**
- **Trouble Concentrating / Impaired Memory**
- **Substance Abuse**  
(use of drugs/alcohol to relieve emotional suffering)
- **Self-Harm / Self-Injury**
- **Stockholm Syndrome**  
(a subconscious involuntary bonding with the abuser)
- **Depression**
- **Sexually Transmitted Infections**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Sleep Disorders**
- **Eating Disorders**
- **Body Memories**  
(the abuse experienced takes a physical form that cannot be explained by the usual means)
- **Psychological Disorders**
- **Suicide**
- **Panic Attacks**
- **Hypervigilance**

**S**elf-care is an important part of the healing process for those recovering from a sexual assault. Pay attention to yourself and to your needs. Make yourself and your recovery a priority.

1. *Food.* We often overlook eating regularly when we are stressed or troubled. Try to eat regular meals.
2. *Exercise* - even if it's a quick walk at lunchtime, exercise can help combat feelings of sadness or depression.
3. *Remember to breathe.* Sounds ridiculous? However, when we are fearful or under stress, we have a tendency to breathe very shallowly or hold our breath, which leads to increased tension. Take full, deep breaths to relieve the tension and flood the brain with oxygen.
4. *One day at a time!* It is natural for your mind to want to "put all the pieces back together again", but unrealistic. You need to remind yourself that it may take months, or years, to fully heal and you need to make it through the moment you are in right now.
5. *If someone says "If there is anything you need, please let me know"* - do that! Tell them what would be helpful to you: taking the children for an afternoon, picking-up a gallon of milk, mowing your lawn, staying the night, bringing over a casserole. People want to help - and you need to let them.
6. *A Circle of Friends.* Make spending time with family and friends that are supportive a priority. Be wary of friends or family who leave you feeling tired or depressed when you see them; are dismissive or belittle your experience as a survivor. Choose the time you spend with them carefully.
7. *Try journaling.* Many survivors find that recording their thoughts and feelings helps them manage their emotions after an assault.
8. *Join a support group* for survivors of sexual assault who understand what you've been through and can share your grief and celebrate your joys.

- In 8 out of 10 rape cases, the victim knew the perpetrator.
- Nearly 1 in 4 women may experience sexual violence in their lifetime.
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of 18.
- 81% of sexual assault victims are female.

Whether or not you decide to report the assault to the police, the ywca is here to help you. We can help with

- A 24-hour crisis line so you can reach us anytime
- Counseling Programs
- Medical, legal and law-enforcement advocacy
- Assisting you with creating a safety plan
- Informing you of your rights as a victim
- Accessing other community resources
- A safe and secure place to stay
- A support group for sexual assault/abuse survivors
- Survivor advocacy

The mission of the ywca is to provide sexual assault survivors with

*a safe and understanding environment that fosters hope, healing, and empowerment.*



*It is vital for a victim of sexual assault to receive medical attention, regardless of his or her decision to report the crime to the police.*

**Y**wca advocates are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for victims of sexual assault. We provide support, advocacy, and crisis intervention. We will accompany victims to the hospital, police stations and the courts.

Although you might choose otherwise, we hope you will report your attack to the police. While there's no way to change what happened to you, you can seek justice and help stop it from happening to someone else.

### Receiving Medical Attention

It is vital for a victim of sexual assault to receive medical attention. For the victim's health and self-protection, it is important to be checked for possible injuries and STD's.

### Importance of DNA

If you report the assault to the police, the DNA evidence collected will be a key tool for law enforcement's investigation and prosecution of a sexual assault case. It will also be included in the National DNA Database.

### Preserving & Collecting Forensic Evidence

If you wish, a forensic medical exam may be performed at a hospital by a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), sexual assault forensic examiner (SAFE) or another medical professional. A ywca advocate can be with you during the exam.

Join our *Sexual Assault Support Group*. Statistics show that being able to talk openly and honestly with other victims who understand what you are going through and who will provide a circle of support is one of the best resources for healing.

**I**f you have a friend or family member that has been a victim of a sexual assault, you probably have many questions about the best way to help them in their recovery. You may not know how to respond to what happened; be angry that someone you love has been harmed, sad about how this will change their life - a mix of emotions. What is important is that you show the victim that you care and that you can help support them.

- Listen and don't be judgmental.
- Be patient. Healing is different for every individual and may take sometime.
- Empower them. Sexual assault crimes take away the individual's power. No matter what you think is the 'right' thing to do, let them make their own decisions.
- Offer to accompany them to report the assault to the police and/or seek medical attention.
- Call our 24 hour hotline (800.669.3176) to talk to an adocate about what you can do.
- Encourage them to call our hotline to find out what assistance is available.
- Don't disclose what your friend tells you to other people without their permission.

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

300 Main St.  
Lewiston, ID 83501

# Sexual Assault and Abuse

information  
for survivors,  
friends and family

800.669.3176

**24 hour helpline**

208.746.9655

**ywca** Lewiston, ID  
Clarkston, WA  
eliminating racism  
empowering women