

U I U I π L L
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The overwhelming majority of sexual assaults reported are true.

There is no incentive whatsoever for someone who has not actually experienced assault to falsely take on the identity of a survivor. After all, the media and our society vilify survivors and grill them for information in really re-traumatizing ways. Why would someone who hasn't actually experienced assault want to go through this grueling process? Even most survivors aren't comfortable disclosing their experiences for this reason!

- ★ only 20% of female student survivors, age 18-24, report to law enforcement

Although the media may focus on false accusations, this is a misogynistic tactic rooted in sexist representations of women as vengeful liars. It also takes away attention from survivors and their trauma. If somebody discloses an experience of sexual assault or violence to you, believe them whether they are friends, acquaintances, strangers, or even foes.

- ★ 21% of TGQN (transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming) college students have been sexually assaulted, compared to 18% of non-TGQN females, and 4% of non-TGQN males

Believe the survivor even if the perpetrator they name is a friend, classmate, romantic partner, or acquaintance of yours. 9 out of 10 college-aged survivors know their perpetrators. Chances are, on a campus as small as ours, you know people who have been assaulted and their assaulters. This makes it all the more important to create safer spaces on campus (especially in the party scene).

- ★ there is a higher likelihood of sexual assault occurring during a student's first month and a half of freshman year, also known as the "red zone"

★ Your first thought might be, "But ___ can't be a perp!"

Of course, learning that your friend has assaulted someone can be painful to hear. But you must enter this complex, emotional process believing the survivor.

→ Lose that thought immediately. The media gives us a very particular stereotype of who can be a perpetrator of sexual assault:

Racialized biases - men of color are often racially profiled and disproportionately portrayed as perps
Male bias (women and nonbinary folks can be perps too!)

& legally convicted more frequently

Class bias - mainly against the working class

Fraternity affiliation - there is statistical truth to this (frat guys are 3 times more likely to assault someone) but we should recognize plenty of perps aren't in frats

Athletes - trust us, some perps sit on the Quiet Side (art majors can be perps too!)

Remember, people of all genders can be perps. People who claim to be feminists, anti-racist activists, and are otherwise politically progressive can be perps. Perps can be the people you suspect the most, the people you suspect the least, and everyone in between. Still, we must be mindful of the stereotypes and racialization in the mainstream perception of perps.

If your friend confides in you about committing sexual assault, thank them for their honesty and vulnerability. Make a plan so your friend can be accountable and fix their behavior. Help by checking in with them and ensuring their behavior is truly changing.

SELF WINE

when someone reaches out to you with sensitive information like this, be kind to yourself! it means a lot that they would feel comfortable sharing this with you, so give yourself a pat on the back for being a good friend.

of course, this can be a lot to take in, so allow yourself time to process.

talk to other friends, family members, or even a medical professional if you need. don't be hesitant to reach out to any of these people!

remember, it is not your sole responsibility to educate your friend or try to change their behavior (especially if you are a survivor yourself)! find others (friends, family members, counselors, medical professionals) who can do this work and share the burden with you.

2222 find good, healthy self-care methods you can use to mitigate the stress. some examples are getting a good night's sleep, eating a wholesome yum! meal, watching TV, listening to music that makes you feel good, journaling, crafting, exercising, going for a walk, spending time outside, meditating and engaging in mindfulness, practicing breathing exercises, or whatever else works for you!

evaluate what you are comfortable with and what you are not (for example: how comfortable are you with being close with your friend? what are some lines you need to draw for yourself?)

WHY THE F@*# IS THIS HAPPENING TO ME?

Take time to grieve, but then try to contextualize your grief. Why are you so impacted by this news? Why are you so surprised?

Use this experience to recognize the widespread nature of sexual assault. We like to think of acts of violence as rare, individual, and isolated events, but in reality, we live in a culture built on and sustained by violence: a rape culture.

RAPE CULTURE: "a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent." -Emilie Buchwald

WHEN VIOLENCE IS NORMALIZED, IT BECOMES invisible.

It is important to understand that perpetrators have not deviated from societal expectations and moral codes of conduct-rather, they have reproduced them. They are a product of socialized
violence
aggression
hyper-masculinity

"IT'S ALL SOCIETY'S FAULT!!!"

True: sexual assault is a societal issue, such that framing perps as evil ignores larger structures.

False: sexual violence is an excusable/justifiable behavior.

We have to hold each other accountable.

TALKING TO THE PUP

if your friend reveals they have violated somebody, call them in, don't call them out. use your position as a trusted friend to hold them accountable. ask the hard questions (but in a way that shows you care about them and want them to change their behavior):

why is their behavior not okay?

what is consent?

how are they going to move forward?

what do they need from you and others in order to change their behavior?

this can be a really hard conversation to have, especially with someone close to you. emphasize to them that you come from a place of good intentions and that you hope they'll listen to your constructive criticism. as their friend, it hurts you to see them hurt others.

you hold the power to decide what will work best for your friend. if you think a more direct approach would be best, do that! you reserve the right to be very upset and hurt by your friend's actions, so if you feel like ending the friendship is what's best for you that's okay too.

"as a friend, i'm really disappointed in you. but i'm here to make sure you change your behavior and i would like to support you through that process. it's important that you take responsibility for your actions...what do you think you need in order to do that?"

"hey...i've been really worried about your behavior. i want you to know that there are plenty of people and resources you can turn to. i can't personally be that friend right now but know that i care about you and want you to change."

HOW LENIENT SHOULD YOU BE?



If your friend repeats the behavior, question their desire to change. This could be the point you decide to end the friendship. This sends a clear message to them that you will not support them if they do not support others' bodies.

If your friend doesn't repeat the behavior but still chooses a road of apathy: do they truly regret or even understand the weight of their actions?

How can they prove to you that they stand with survivors?



How can they show you that they understand the intricacies of assault?

How are they making sure others won't repeat their mistake?



Remember, do not excuse or attempt to justify the perpetrator's actions. This may seem obvious, but depending on how close you are to the perp, you may be experiencing conflicting loyalties. This is entirely natural, but recognize and address this internal tug-of-war before you fall into a victim-blaming trap. At this point, you may choose to sit down with your friend-turned-perp and explain how their actions have had impacted you emotionally. DO NOT confront them if you feel even the slightest hesitation: if you sense any danger in a face-to-face encounter or feel uneasy as to how they might react, steer clear.



ACCOUNTABLE

remember that sexual assault is never justifiable. even if they were just "fucked up," "messed up," "blacked out," or "misunderstood the situation," **they did something wrong.** they need to learn from this experience and change their ways immediately.

even if your friend is not a repeat offender, question their true understanding^{INX} of wrongdoing if they do not actively involve themselves in the conversation.*

here are some ways you can make sure your perp engages with the conversation appropriately:

- ★ make sure they don't reach out to their survivor for these resources and conversations (yikes!)
- ★ keep them away from spaces designated for survivors...even if they're a "reformed perp" they should respect "no perps allowed" spaces
- ★ at the end of the day, they're responsible for their own education and shouldn't make anyone else engage in excessive emotional labor for them. advise them to find internet resources, counselors, and healthcare services to lighten your load

*at the same time, it can be unsettling to survivors to suddenly see reformed perps engaging in anti-sexual assault work. it can come off as performative and also work to invalidate survivors' experiences.

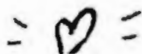
be mindful of the ways your friend engages with this sort of activism if they choose to and be aware of the space they take up.

remember: this is about the survivor, not you

literally the most important thing you can do is respect the agency of the survivor -- in other words, let them make their own decisions about what is best for them and their perpetrator moving forward. don't ever stand in the way of a survivor who wishes to report, either on campus or off. at the same time, if a survivor chooses not to do anything, don't pressure them. some survivors continue relationships with their perpetrators for a number of reasons. especially on a campus as small as ours, it can be really hard to cut off ties completely. don't assume a survivor isn't traumatized or otherwise affected by their assault if they don't cut off their perpetrator or report their case. at the same time, don't assign your own ideas of trauma onto the survivor. we all deal with painful experiences in different ways. for some survivors, this means repressing their experience and acting "normal," for some this even means forgiving and continuing the relationship with their perp. we are all dynamic and autonomous beings.



like we said earlier, there are tons of reasons why survivors might feel uncomfortable opening up, moving forward, and holding their perpetrators accountable. no matter what you personally feel as a friend of the perpetrator's, **respect the survivor's wishes.**



WES

sexual assault is a *huge* issue on our campus...and it's an issue on literally every other campus, too. as much as this situation can feel exceptional, it's not. unfortunately cases like these happen all the time.

@michael roth

despite the ~liberal utopia vibe~ that our administrators (and other similar universities) curate, sexual assaults occur here more often than the official stats show. the institution doesn't always respond in the interest of the survivor because high rates of sexual assault are directly damaging to its image. the university will avoid a lawsuit or PR scandal at all costs.

that's why it's so important for **you** to support survivors and hold your perpetrator friends accountable. this is the work that shouldn't fall on individuals but the institution often refuses to do it. the responsibility is on all of us to make this campus better and safer for survivors.

it's up

the SYSTEM

1 1111 1111 1111 moving forward.

Need to vent?

Reach out to Rachele Merliss, this year's SART (Sexual Assault Response Intern) to speak in confidence.

Not sure of what to tell your perp friend or how to start this sort of conversation?

Like we said, this is hard work. We applaud you for engaging in it and encourage you to seek out the help you need, whether from online resources, friends, figures of authority, or counselors.

Look online for restorative justice resources. Although they are typically meant for survivors and perpetrators, they can also be useful in finding a language to talk about sexual assault and your friend's wrongdoing in a way that doesn't alienate or dehumanize them.

Want to get involved with these conversations and issues on campus?

Join *<Students for Consent and Communication (SFCC)>* by reaching out to Madeline Jones at mjjones@wesleyan.edu or attending a meeting at Community Engagement House on Mondays at 4:30 PM!

Sign up for Bystander Intervention Training, which is offered periodically throughout the year, by talking to someone at WesWell or visiting the WesWell page on the Wesleyan website!

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feel free to REACH OUT
to us with
questions, comments,
or
concerns!