

# Relationship Violence & Rape

# 14

Have you ever thought of or dreamed about the “perfect” characteristics you would like in an intimate partner? Maybe those qualities would be loving, attentive, intellectual, humorous, trustworthy, or balanced. You’re probably not seeking out a partner identified as violent, abusive, mistrustful, manipulative, or demanding. Unfortunately, sometimes people and relationships change, and what starts out as a safe, happy, and healthy situation can turn into an unhappy, unsafe, and fearful one.

Now, don’t get us wrong...not all relationships or people become hurtful and violent, but it’s important to know the signs of an unhealthy relationship and how to seek help if you are in one, because **no one** – not even you! – **deserves to be hurt, mistreated, or abused.**

## How is Your Relationship?

A “relationship” is a connection you make with another person. This person may be a family member, friend, intimate/sexual partner, peer, or any number of people you interact with. The connection you make can vary, too, from impersonal to friendly to familial to romantic. Additionally, it’s normal for relationships to fluctuate between high-low times, and “healthy” or “unhealthy” characteristics. The key is to **build a relationship that has more “healthy” qualities over time.** Here are a few comparative qualities to help you gauge your relationships:

### Healthy Relationships

Making a relationship healthy takes work on both peoples’ behalves and involves trust, communication, listening, and identifying each other’s needs.

#### Characteristics:

- Communication is open and spontaneous (includes listening).
- Individuality, freedom, and personal identity are enhanced.
- Each person enjoys doing things for self, as well as for each other.
- Play, humor, and having fun together are commonplace.
- Conflict is faced directly and resolved. Neither side is afraid to state his/her feelings or opinions.
- Each is trustful of the other.
- Balance of giving and receiving.
- Mistakes are accepted and learned from.
- Other meaningful relationships and interests exist.
- Self-responsibility for own behavior and happiness (not blaming the other).

### Unhealthy Relationships

Unhealthy relationships are not beneficial to either person, and in the long run can cause sadness, anger, and disappointment.

#### Characteristics:

- Communication is one-sided with little listening to each other.
- Individuality, freedom, and personal identity are discouraged.
- One or both persons become self-oriented and fail to share with the other.
- Periods of argument, unhappiness, and even violence are commonplace.
- Conflict is not faced, but builds up to an "explosion".
- One person becomes the "giver" in the relationship and the other the "taker".
- There are few if any outside/other relationships - one or both persons may be restricted from seeing family or friends.
- Little responsibility taken for self-happiness and more often blaming the other person occurs.

## Students in Relationships

We understand that being a student in a relationship may be challenging at times – students have irregular hours, high academic demands, and much to do in little time. These student-specific stresses can be mediated when there is a “healthy” relationship to turn to for emotional support, while an “unhealthy” relationship can increase the stress and cause hurt to

**FACT: 12%\*\* of UofC students reported feeling emotionally abused and/or otherwise mistreated in a relationship in the past 12 months.**

**\*\* Males & females were very similar in their reported rates of emotional abuse and mistreatment.**

*University of Chicago Student Health Assessment Survey, 2005 data undergraduate & graduate students*

oneself or others. Keep in mind that students – yes, all of us – can be on the **receiving and giving** end of unhealthy relationship behaviors, so it's important to evaluate our relationships regularly to see if we need to seek help/safety or modify our own hurtful behaviors.

Finally, we want to stress that “healthy” relationships take a little work, so if difficulties do appear keep the communication lines open and work with your partner to set clear limits and boundaries that allow each of you to take care of your work, your relationship, and yourselves. (Resources for help are listed later in this chapter.)

## Recognizing Relationship Violence

Relationship violence can happen to anyone – all ethnicities and religions; males or females; single, married/partnered, or divorced; or heterosexual, gay, bisexual, or transgendered people. Some types of relationship violence include:

### Verbal

- Threats, blaming, criticizing, name calling, berating, lying, etc.

### Emotional

- Insults, humiliation, “mind games”, jealousy, fear, overprotectiveness, dismissive, etc.

### Sexual

- Forced sexual activity/rape, critical of sexual performance, anger/threats to have sex, etc.

### Physical

- Pushing, shoving, hitting, choking, throwing objects, restraining, biting, etc.

Violence can also include withholding money, medical care, transportation, or safety, and violence may be directed at the partner or his/her loved ones (e.g. parents, children, pets, friends).

## The Cycle of Violence

Relationship violence is an ongoing cycle involving revolving periods of calm, tension, violence, and apology. It's important to remember that violence is repetitive and although the violent outbreaks may be occasional at first (e.g. once a year, every few months), they can occur more often over time (e.g. weekly, daily) and also escalate in severity.

The typical stages or progression of violence are:

### Stage 1: Tension-Building

This stage is composed of many minor incidents of abuse, including jealousy, tantrums, controlling behaviors, verbal abuse, threats of violence, etc., that gradually increase in severity.

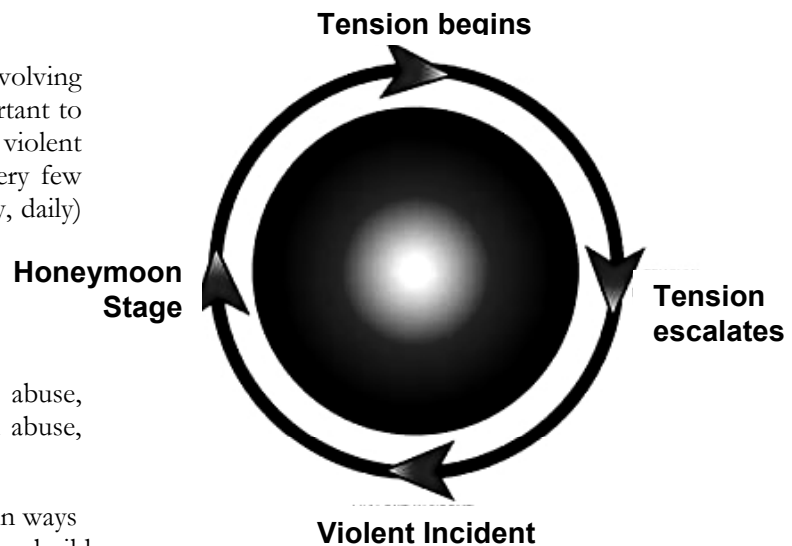
This stage is characterized by the abused partner behaving in ways to avoid conflict and confrontation. Nevertheless, the tension builds and builds until it becomes unbearable and all control by the abuser is lost.

Quite often, the event that triggers the second stage, a violent incident, is a power struggle. The abuser issues an ultimatum that cannot be met by the partner, and rather than losing face, the abuser reacts violently and explosively. At other times, the event that triggers the violence will be seemingly insignificant or an easily resolvable problem or issue such as dinner being late or running late for an appointment.

### Stage 2: Violent Incident

This stage is characterized by the abuser's perceived lack of control of the situation and subsequent violent outbreak. The abuser's violence is often meant to teach the partner a lesson and emphasize the abuser's power in the relationship.

Stage 2 is a brief period and it is impossible to predict the type of violence, when and where it will occur, or its severity. The attack is followed by shock, denial and disbelief by the abused partner. Abusers will rationalize their reaction and will minimize its hurtful effects on the partner – often blaming the partner for triggering the abuse.



### Stage 3: Honeymoon Stage

This stage is characterized as calm with the abuser exhibiting kind, loving behavior towards his/her partner. The abuser knows that he/she has overreacted; is very sorry; and, wishes to redeem him/herself. Since the tension is gone, the abuser asks for forgiveness and honestly believes he/she will not do it again. All of the abuser's actions are for reconciliation, and promises are made to do everything necessary to keep the relationship and to be happy together again. Often the abused partner feels relief and hope that the violence is behind them.

At the completion of Stage 3, a period of calm may occur until Stage 1 begins over again, and the cycle continues; tension – violence – remorse, over and over and over.

Image and information from the Lake County, Illinois States' Attorneys Office

## What to Do

### If You're Being Abused

It's not always easy to leave a relationship – even when you're being hurt. It's okay to feel that you can't leave right now. Remember that your safety is important, so get information and seek out help as soon as possible.

- **Don't blame yourself.** You are not the cause of the abuse and you do not deserve to be abused under any circumstance.
- **Refuse to be abused.** Imagine saying, "Stop that!" until you can say this aloud when abuse happens. Don't excuse your partner's violent behavior.
- **Think about leaving.** You may decide it's time to end the relationship for your own well-being.
- **Think about your safety.** If you need to leave a violent situation quickly, consider keeping the following on hand: enough money (cash, ATM or credit cards) to get you to a safe place, a bag with personal items (clothes, medicine, extra keys, personal papers/ID/ passport), a trusted person to keep your bag, and a safe place to go.
- **Seek help.** Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or health care provider, or look in the phone book for local shelters/resources.

### If Someone You Care About is Being Abused

Listening to a friend/family member talk about being abused can be hard. It's important to be supportive, to listen, and to help your friend/family member make a plan for safety.

- **Express concern and listen.** Listen carefully to your friend and believe what is said – you may be the only person she/he has trusted enough to tell.
- **Try to understand.** It can be very hard for a person to leave an abusive relationship, so your friend may not be ready now – don't judge your friend's actions or choices, or try to control what the next step should be. Offer support and be patient.
- **Validate feelings.** You might say something like "This must be very hard for you," "What he did was abusive," "She was wrong to treat you that way."
- **Offer support for staying safe.** Help your friend develop a safety plan, pass along information about local support services, and be willing to help but be clear about what you can and cannot do.
- **Stay in touch.** Abusers often try to isolate partners, so don't give up on the person you care about, no matter how frustrated you get.

### If You are the Abuser

If these descriptions of an abusive partner describe you, there are some things you can do to help:

- **Take responsibility.** Your partner does not make you act this way and she/he is not the cause of the abuse. Feeling angry or frustrated is not an excuse to hurt another person. Being abusive is wrong, no matter what.
- **Stop the abuse.** When you feel like you are losing control and becoming violent, leave the room and do something else so you won't act abusive. "Take a break" from your relationship until you can stop your abuse.
- **Get help.** Talk to your health care provider, call a crisis helpline, or see a counselor to help you deal with your feelings that trigger an abusive reaction.

## Where to Seek Help

If you are being abused, you may be feeling alone or that you're the only one – but you're not. There are many support services available for persons being abused, friends trying to help, and even for abusers trying to stop. Whatever it is that you might need, it's important to talk to someone – a trusted friend, professional, or someone else – who can help:

### Campus Resources:

- ❑ **Student Care Center (SCC):** medical attention and primary health center for University of Chicago students. Call (773) 702-4156 to make an appointment with a Womancare or general provider. The **SCC Health Education Specialist** is also available to meet with students for health promotion and resources – call (773) 834-5143.
- ❑ **Student Counseling & Resource Service (SCRS):** mental health care providers for University of Chicago students. Counseling is available for individuals, couples, and families. Call (773) 702-9800 to make an appointment to talk about your concerns or concern for a friend/family member.
- ❑ **Campus clergy/ministers/religious support:** call (773) 702-8282
- ❑ **Resources for Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP):** call (773) 702-7200.
- ❑ **University Police:** call 123 from a campus phone or (773) 702-8181.

### Chicago Resources

- ❑ **Chicago Domestic Violence Helpline** (24 hrs.): 1-877-863-6338
- ❑ **Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline** (24 hrs.): 1-888-293-2080
- ❑ **Horizons LGBTQ Hotline** (6-10pm): (773) 929-HELP
- ❑ **Planned Parenthood Chicago Hotline:** (312) 592-6850

### National Resources:

- ❑ **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-SAFE or [www.ndvh.org](http://www.ndvh.org)
- ❑ **Family Violence Prevention Fund:** [www.endabuse.org/gethelp](http://www.endabuse.org/gethelp)

---

## Sexual Assault & Acquaintance Rape

Similar to relationship violence, sexual assault and rape are **violent crimes of power** in which the perpetrator (or abuser, rapist, aggressor, etc.) uses sexual activity as a means to assault and control another person (or the victim). Typically, we only hear about sexual assaults and rapes by strangers who the victim did not know, but sexual assaults and rapes **oftentimes occur between people who know each other as acquaintances**. This type of sexual assault, known as acquaintance rape, often goes unreported because victims may be confused and in disbelief that someone they knew and trusted sexually assaulted or raped them.

The term “sexual assault” means any **forced, unwanted and nonconsensual sexual contact or activity** including touching, kissing exhibitionism, and intercourse – anal, vaginal or oral – that one person does to another. Sexual assault is a crime of violence, the purpose of which is to overpower, control, and/or humiliate another person. These sexual crimes can happen to anyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc. In addition, sexual perpetrators can be male or female, as well as their intended victims.

**FACT: 8.7%\*\* of UofC students reported experiencing verbal threats for sex and/or sexual touching against their will in the past 12 months.**

**\*\* Female undergraduates were most likely to report experiencing this forced sexual behavior.**

*University of Chicago Student Health Assessment Survey, 2005 data undergraduate & graduate students*

## Debunking the Myths

Unfortunately, many males and females still believe the myths that sexual assault or acquaintance rape is a “provoked” event due to the victim’s clothing, behaviors, or statements. This is simply not true! **No one asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted or raped**, just like no one asks or deserves to be in a violent and abusive relationship. These myths perpetuate the belief that overpowering and controlling another person sexually (or

otherwise) is “okay”, but it’s not and we need to **work as a community to correct misperceptions** if people around us make the following statements:

**MYTH:**

If your partner does not physically resist your sexual actions or advances, it’s not rape.

**FACT:**

**Being passive, not fighting, or not protesting does not give permission for sexual consent or activity.**

**MYTH:**

If you and your partner have had sex before, or your partner is not a virgin, it’s not rape.

**FACT:**

**A partner’s prior sexual history has no bearing. There must be mutual consent for sex every time.**

**MYTH:**

“No” or “Stop” can mean “maybe” or even “yes.”

**FACT:**

**No means no! Stop means stop! If there is doubt, ask.**

**MYTH:**

Provocative clothing, flirting, touching, hugging, or kissing is an invitation to have sex.

**FACT:**

**Sexy dressing is not consent for sex. Flirting and foreplay is not consent for sex. If you want to have sex...ask.**

**MYTH:**

If the person (or both parties) is drunk or passed out from alcohol or drugs, it’s okay to have sex.

**FACT:**

**Under Illinois law, any person who has drugs or alcohol in their body cannot legally give consent to have sex. Without consent, the sexual activity is considered rape.**

**MYTH:**

If a person goes to someone’s room or house or goes to a bar, he/she assumes the risk of sexual assault.

**FACT:**

**A person can choose to go to another’s residence or a bar without wanting to become sexually active. If you want to have sex – ask. Remember, if either party says “no” or “stop” that means STOP the sexual activity.**

## What is consensual sex?

We’ve been talking a lot about consensual sex. So, what is it? Under Illinois State law, **“consent” means a freely given agreement to a specific act of sexual activity.** In other words, there must be definite agreement for oral, anal, and/or vaginal sex, etc. Sexy clothing is not an agreement for sex. Furthermore, just because you and your partner agreed to have oral sex, and then you move the activity towards vaginal/anal sex, doesn’t mean that your partner has given consent for this additional sexual activity. Under Illinois State law, “no” means “no” and any time that a partner expresses a desire to stop – you need to stop or else you can be charged with sexual assault or rape. Finally, keep in mind that under Illinois State law, anyone who is cognitively impaired/influenced by alcohol or drugs cannot legally give consent for sex.

Okay...we know these statements make sex sound more technical than romantic, but **it’s important to talk to your partner(s) before becoming sexually intimate** and get a verbal “yes” because maybe you expected to have oral or anal sex, but your partner does not want to; or maybe you expected to undress your partner and have sex, but your partner wanted to only lay in bed clothed and kiss/snuggle. **There’s a difference** and the law draws a line...in order for sex not to be rape it must be **consensual.**

### Guidelines for Consensual Sex:

1. **Both partners are fully alert** (without alcohol/drugs in the body).
2. **Both partners are equally free to act** (and feel confident expressing “no” or “stop” at any time during sexual activity).
3. **Both partners are positive and sincere in their desires.**
4. **Both partners have clearly communicated their intent and agreement to specific sexual intimacy.**

## Reducing the Risk

We want to empower you with concrete, active steps that you might use to help reduce your risk of sexual assault or rape and strengthen your self-definition of agreeable “consensual sex.” Keep in mind that **these strategies are not fail-proof schemes** to prevent unwanted sexual advances. Nothing that you do is an absolute guarantee against sexual assault – if a perpetrator is intent on violence it often doesn’t matter to him/her who the victim is or the precautionary steps you took to reduce risk. This is why **if you have been sexually assaulted, it is by no means your fault** and you should not blame yourself – it is the perpetrator’s behaviors and actions that are to blame, not your own. Here are a few risk-reducing tips:

- ❑ **Know your sexual desires, expectations and limits, and communicate them clearly.** Don’t let anyone misunderstand what it is that you want or don’t want sexually. Increase your confidence and ability to say “no” or “stop” under any circumstance.
- ❑ **Trust your intuition.** If something feels wrong or uncomfortable (even if with a friend), get out.
- ❑ **Always communicate clearly and effectively.** Be strong in your words and actions (so you’ll be heard!). **Be assertive** -- if you tell someone to leave you alone, say it like you mean it. Likewise, if you hear “no” from the other person, STOP what you’re doing immediately.
- ❑ **Listen carefully to your partner’s verbal, as well as non-verbal, messages and ask questions.** You’ll know if the other person is misinterpreting your words or actions by being aware of what she/he says and does. If you’re confused, ask.
- ❑ **Look carefully and be alert.** Be aware of your surroundings so that if you are trapped in a situation you will know how to get out. Watch for empty rooms and closed or locked doors. If you do find yourself trapped, verbalize what’s happening to you, shout, “I don’t like this!” Such an exclamation may be enough to make the aggressor stop.
- ❑ **Monitor alcohol use and drug consumption.** These substances have an undeniable effect on your judgment/intuition and impair your ability to pick up warning cues and be aware of your surroundings.
- ❑ **If you find yourself in a situation where you are being attacked, use active strategies like yelling for help, running away and fighting back.** Don’t be afraid to use force. (Statistics show that about 81% of the women who fought back during an attempted rape got away. No statistics were found for male victims.) However, if the aggressor is threatening your life in some way or has a weapon, it is a judgment call as to whether you want to fight back.

## Date-Rape Drugs

In Chapter 12 (pg, 42) of this booklet, we discussed the effects of **Rohypnol and GHB** as the most commonly used “date rape” drugs, since they dissolve easily (e.g. colorless, odorless, tasteless) into beverages, and often leave the intended victim disoriented, drowsy, and with memory impairment. Here are a few strategies for protecting yourself (and your drink) from encountering a date-rape drug:

- **Watch your drink at all times and don't leave it unattended.** Take your drink with you wherever you go, even to the rest room. If you do leave your drink unattended, throw it out and make a new one.
- Don't accept a drink from anyone you don't know and trust. At a bar or club, **accept drinks directly from the bartender**, waiter or waitress. If someone offers to buy you a drink, go with him or her to the bar and **watch the bartender make your drink.**
- Do not accept open container drinks from anyone and avoid punch bowls.
- If you are walking around a party/club with your drink, **cover the top of the drink with your hand** to avoid someone slipping you a drug (as well as to avoid spilling the drink on others!).
- Be aware of your surroundings and people around you.
- Always use the **"buddy system"** and never leave your friends behind. Avoid going to parties alone or where you don't know anyone.
- If you suspect that you've been drugged and/or sexually assaulted, go to the Emergency Room immediately. Request urine samples and tests for Rohypnol and GHB.

## What to Do

### If You have been Raped

It's normal to feel shocked, fearful, self-blaming, and unsafe, or have a desire to forget after a sexual assault/rape. It's also important to know that you are not alone and there are people who can help – **the decision to act is yours** and **there are many choices** open to you:

- **Don't blame yourself.** You, your actions, your beliefs were not the cause of the sexual assault and no one deserves to be raped.
- **Seek immediate help:**
  - ❑ Go to a safe place (friend, hospital, etc.).
  - ❑ Call someone you trust to be with you or to talk (friend, rape crisis center, Dean-on-Call).
  - ❑ Seek medical care (STI/HIV testing, emergency contraception, etc.) through the Student Care Center, hospital ER, or other provider.
  - ❑ Consider reporting the assault.
- **You can also press charges:**
  - ❑ Call the local or campus police.
  - ❑ Preserve physical evidence, such as clothing, and don't shower, bathe, douche, or brush your teeth until after a medical exam.
- **Find support.** Talk to a trusted friend, family member, health care provider, or rape crisis counselor for help in understanding your feelings.

### If Someone You Care About has been Raped

Listening to a friend/family member/partner talk about being sexually assaulted can be hard. You may be the first person they confided in after the assault – whether that attack occurred 10-minutes or 10-years ago. Here are some things you can do to help:

- **Listen.** Listen carefully to your friend and believe what is said. Focus on listening instead of offering advice or asking questions. You may be the only person she/he has trusted enough to tell.
- **Try to understand.** It can be very hard for a person to seek medical care or press charges after an assault – don't judge your friend's actions or choices, or try to control what the next step should be. Offer support and be patient.
- **Validate feelings.** It's important to remind your friend that this was not their fault. Try saying, "I'm sorry this happened to you, it wasn't your fault," or "Thank you for trusting me – I know it must be really tough for you to tell me this."
- **Offer support.** It's okay to let your friend know your limits of time, energy, and emotion you can give in helping them through this process. Offer resources to your friend about local support centers or rape crisis counselors.

## Where to Seek Help

After a sexual assault, the survivor may or may not be ready to seek out resources and support systems for help. Remember though that these resources are always available for when that time is right and help is needed – whether the assault happened yesterday or years ago. Also, these resources are available for the friends, families, and partners of sexual assault survivors, who may also need help in dealing with their emotions about the attack on their loved one.

Campus Resources:

- ❑ **Sexual Assault Dean-on-Call:** Available 24-hours. Call (773) 702-8181 or (773) 834-HELP.
- ❑ **Student Care Center (SCC):** medical attention and primary health center for University of Chicago students. Call (773) 702-4156 to make an appointment with a Womancare or general provider. The **SCC Health Education Specialist** is also available to meet with students for health promotion and resources – call (773) 834-5143.
- ❑ **Student Counseling & Resource Service (SCRS):** mental health care providers for University of Chicago students. Counseling is available for individuals, couples, and families. Call (773) 702-9800 to make an appointment to talk about your concerns or concern for a friend/family member.
- ❑ **Campus clergy/ministers/religious support:** call (773) 702-8282
- ❑ **Resources for Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP):** call (773) 702-7200.
- ❑ **University Police:** call 123 from a campus phone or (773) 702-8181.

Chicago Resources

- ❑ **Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline (24 hrs.):** 1-888-293-2080
- ❑ **Horizons LGBTQ Hotline (6-10pm):** (773) 929-HELP
- ❑ **Planned Parenthood Chicago Hotline:** (312) 592-6850

National Resources:

- ❑ **RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline (24 hrs):** 1-800-656-HOPE
- ❑ **Emergency Contraception Hotline:** 1-888-NOT-2-LATE