Two months after she told
the two of us she was raped, he
wrote her a letter that said,
“Maybe it wouldn’t have happened if
you didn’t wear clothes like that.”
He was her friend and he
wrote that to her. I watched her
Cry during lunch and I thought
You’re beautiful in that dress.
It wasn’t your fault.
You’re beautiful in that dress.
It wasn’t your fault.
You’re beautiful.
It wasn’t your fault.
Dear Reader,

Sexual violence is not just a “women’s issue.” It is often argued that it is, in fact, a “men’s issue,” given that perpetrators are, almost always male. We ask our readers to consider sexual violence an issue that involves everyone, not just victims and perpetrators. As individuals responsible for building our campus culture, we can challenge current cultural and institutional practices that permit or even facilitate sexual violence on campus and beyond.

If we want to change the statistic that one in six American women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime, we must set our gazes inwards, on the culture we reinforce every time we laugh at a joke about rape, ask what a victim was wearing at the time of an assault, or passively listen when a friend in the dining hall boasts about the “bitch” or “slut” he “fucked” last night. By remaining silent, we perpetuate harmful sexual practices and beliefs. Be vigilant when you’re out at night with your friends. Don’t tolerate “harmless” sexist jokes. Speak up. Say that this language makes you uncomfortable. Extend your support to victims. Question gender and sexual roles.

As one participant in our community survey on sexual violence writes: “Question, question, question: Question your indifference towards the little things - language first - and make a point of it, every day. Question the institutions around you and how they impact gender dynamics, even if you think they are innocuous. Question the gender role-playing at Clubs, parties, and bars.”

Our aim in publishing Saturday Night: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault is to encourage this questioning; to generate dialogue where there is habitual silence, and to share these painful narratives that so clearly point to current dark spots in our campus culture. Something is broken. A lot must change. Saturday Night asks that we all take responsibility for this community issue. We hope that the stories, images, and poems to follow will make our case all the more vividly and inspire you to be part of the change we all need.

Sincerely,

The Saturday Night at Harvard team
Kristen, Sid, Conor, Sonali, and Sarah
NOTES TO OUR READERS

- All names in the narratives have been changed.
- If you would like to submit narratives or commentary for future editions, please visit www.fas.harvard.edu/~osapr for more information. All submissions are held in strict confidence.
- The individuals in the photographs do not relate to the narratives in which they are featured. These individuals were gracious volunteers who were willing to be photographed for the publication.
- *Saturday Night: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault at Harvard* is edited by Harvard undergraduate students. Our advisor is Sarah Rankin, Director of the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response at Harvard University.
- This publication contains a variety of opinions concerning sexual assault. As editors, we do not endorse one particular view but leave it up to you, the reader, to decide where you stand.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Saturday Night* would not have been possible without the help and contributions of a few individuals. Our deepest thanks go to the Saturday Night Staff: Kristen, Siddarth Chandrasekaran, Cronon, Sonali Tatapudy, and Conor Walsh. We also extend a big thanks to My Ngoc To who spent countless hours on the magazine’s layout design, our photographer, Lydia Bunker for her creative visual input, and the staff at OSAPR for their guidance and support.

Finally, this publication would not have been possible without the submissions themselves. Thank you to all our contributors for your willingness to share your stories and experiences. Your words will touch many people and will be used to raise awareness and dialogue about this important issue.
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To all those who this publication will touch,

It could really be any night—or day for that matter. We chose Saturday night as a representative night, a starting point and hopefully a turning point: a place where the community can begin to confront the silent epidemic of sexual assault.

*Saturday Night* magazine began at Duke University in November of 2002. After two violent sexual assaults on campus, as well as countless other less public incidents of sexual violence, the need for action was clear. At that time, a sexual assault survivor wrote an anonymous column to our campus newspaper, asking for support and guidance from students who had been affected by sexual assault. The responses were overwhelming. With the consent of those who responded, these letters and narratives became the content for the first edition of *Saturday Night: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault at Duke*.

When we published *Saturday Night*, our hopes were two-fold. First, we wanted the publication to serve as a source of empowerment and healing for survivors. Second, we hoped that these powerful words from survivors would touch and inform all readers, galvanizing a movement to end sexual assault at Duke.

We are excited to see that *Saturday Night* has spread to Harvard and are hopeful that hearing the voices of survivors in your community will spur change. To that end, *Saturday Night* magazine is not a passive publication. It requires you, the reader, to spread it to the hands and eyes of your fellow community members: only then will you see hearts and minds changed. At Duke, we formed workshops using the publication to target dorms and fraternity/sorority groups. Professors incorporated the publication into syllabi. And perhaps most powerfully, individuals emailed us saying they had been touched when a friend slipped the publication under their door with a handwritten note.

In time, we can end the fear and violence that has crept into our Saturday nights and every other hour of the week.

Hopeful,

*Saturday Night* Co-founders:
Allison Brim
Lauren Jarvis
Ryan Kennedy
Monica Lemmond
Just because I want to dance doesn’t mean I want you to touch me that way
Just because you’re kissing me doesn’t mean I feel the same
Just because you’re dragging me to your room doesn’t mean I want what you do
Just because I’m not strong enough to push you away doesn’t mean what you’re doing to me is okay
Just because you silenced me doesn’t mean inside I’m not screaming for it to be over
Just because you’re a man doesn’t mean you are entitled
Just because what you did to me ripped apart my soul doesn’t mean I won’t get through this and will once again one day be whole
DEAR OSAPR,

I am a straight male who was affected by sexual violence. I was sexually assaulted by my roommate. He was extremely drunk one night and started to kiss me while I thought I was safely asleep in my bed. I woke up to his drunk lips over mine, and after he was done, he proceeded to climb into my bed. I was very shaken from the assault, but I do believe that the straight male voice needs to be heard as I never consented to his heinous actions that morning. I wish to submit a poem that I wrote to help me get over the situation. It is titled: My Fair Memory.* Please consider publishing my work, as it meant a whole lot to me, and I feel that it would mean a lot to others also.

“FADING AWAY”
CHRISTIN ARIEL PETTIBONE
" 'Tis my farewell to thee, fair memory (or not so fair to me)
You took away my trust, but for you, it was a must
I could not sleep comfortably as I feared you would creep in on me
“What do you have to say for yourself?” Is it that you are sorry, or maybe I should put you on the shelf Tabling you until you have control of my every wish and desire
But, rest assured, that you have not succeeded as I am a bugger that refuses to accept the way I was treated
Torment me not, for I am above thee For I am something that you cannot be For I have a will and a body Whilst, you only are a lens covering my ability to see
You fill me up with clouds of doubt You make me wonder what I am all about For you have invaded my space And now you are out of place I know I am not responsible So, I will let you go now As I have let others go in the past I will blaze my trail forward and set a mast for the path of my life May it pick up wind and work to have you pinned to the bottom of the sea of rescind No, that would be too good for you And the childlike cowardness of what you do For as you have controlled me I will control you And use you for a greater purpose anew I will embarrass the last strains that are contained in your frames I will tear you down in order to build you into something purpose-bound You will like it and will not protest For I am the man whose work is the best!"
On the quad shuttle, Charlie pressed me to his side, a gesture like putting his arm around me, except it didn’t feel warm, affectionate, or even friendly. I laughed nervously at his lazy jokes. He smelled expensive and was wearing a pink polo and shiny shoes. The shuttle bumped along and his strong arm around me made my arms feel weak and weightless. We got off the shuttle and I said I wanted to walk back to my dorm, I was feeling tired. Before I finished my sentence, he started kissing me hard on the lips.

He withdrew and said he would take me back to his room, he had some music he wanted to play for me. I wasn’t going to go; I was formulating in my head how to get myself out of the situation. Then my good friend Amy, and some boy she was going home with, approached, smoking cigarettes and laughing. They looked like they were having fun, and Amy recognized Charlie from section. Let’s all go back and listen to music, someone suggested. The four of us went, and I felt oddly detached from the group at first, although Amy was a good friend. I laughed at jokes I wasn’t really listening too, just so I could appear to be participating.

When we were back in Charlie’s room, he put on Coldplay and poured everyone mixed drinks. Amy whispered that he was charming, that I had done well. Everyone was laughing, talking. I gradually became more comfortable, forgetting Charlie’s stone grip on the shuttle. Maybe I was wrong. I would like to be kissed tonight, I thought to myself. I started to engage with the group more, telling animated stories and enjoying the drinks. The night wound down and Amy decided it was time to go home. She kissed my forehead, saying we should catch up tomorrow about the rest of the night to come. She thought we both might have exciting news. I never told Amy about what happened after she left.

As soon as the door closed softly behind Amy and her friend, Charlie descended upon me. He started aggressively kissing me...
and sliding his hands around under my clothes, bearing down on top of me on the couch in his common room. I said something about taking it slower, and he silenced me, locking my mouth under his kiss. He carried me into his dark bedroom. It was a double, and he had the top bunk. I told him his roommates would be back, we really better not do this. Please. But I was getting the sense he did not care. Cold, paralyzing fear started to move through my limbs. I realized I had no recourse. It was chilling.

My entire body was pounding with my heart. My stomach was churning. Charlie tore off my shirt and tugged at my skirt. His hands were moving roughly, recklessly all over my body. I had bruises on my breasts and thighs the next day. I tried to hold on my clothes. I tried to hold on my skirt and tights with both hands. If that isn’t a clear “no,” than what is? When he pushed me onto the bed and pushed inside of me, the pain was so sharp, like I was ripping open.

I did not tell him I was a virgin. Sometimes, before this happened, I would muse to myself what sex would be like with someone I cared about. I mused over the conversation I would have with my partner before we had sex for the first time; my partner would, of course, know I was a virgin, and he would be gentle and responsive. He would revere my body, and make sure I was getting what I wanted out of sex. This is not what it was like for me. And I was angry for so long. I felt cheated.

Now, three years later, I know what sex can be, and it no longer matters to me that I did not have the first time I had envisioned for myself. I have had consensual, casual sex since with partners who respect me. We wake up the next morning and laugh together in bed, enjoying each other’s soft, warm skin. As delicious as this is, I’ve also discovered it pales in comparison to loving someone, and expressing it in every movement and kiss and touch during sex. I wish with my entire being that women and men who have experienced sexual violence heal to discover or rediscover intimacy.

Let us build a world where sex is always chosen.
WHAT IS YOUR PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUS?

“Sexual assault is a real problem at Harvard. It seems to stem from concentrations of male privilege, acutely gendered spaces, or general group-think mentalities.”

WHAT DOES CONSENT MEAN TO YOU?

“Everything. Consent means all parties involved are playing a positive, active, and clearly communicated role in initiating, progressing, and continuing a sex act. A sex act is anything any involved party considers a sex act; there is no ambiguity here or with regards to consent in general.”

“Everybody on the same page. Everybody feelin’ good. Everybody saying yes!”

“Consent: an enthusiastic yes.”

HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF YOU LIVED IN A WORLD WITHOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT?

“I wouldn’t be as scared. I wouldn’t go into a hookup or party wondering what my obligations are, or what impression I gave the person. Expectations and worries of meeting or negating these expectations would be eliminated.”

“To begin with, every single woman that I’ve had a long-term romantic involvement with has been a victim of sexual assault at some point. (One was a victim of rape at Harvard). It is a societal problem that is unsettlingly close, concrete, and real for me. My life would have borne witness to far less emotional anguish, distress, and physical and mental pain without this violence. Moreover, sexual assault has profoundly enhanced my cynicism and negativity about our social customs.”

“I could feel safe initiating physical intimacy with someone, knowing that they would respect my limits and not violate my trust.”

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A POSITION TO INTERVENE IN A SITUATION WHEN SOMEONE MIGHT HAVE BEEN HURT OR TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF? WHAT DID YOU DO? WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

“Yes. I stopped and asked if everything was okay. The guy got weirded out, but the girl laughed and said it was all good. We made eye contact and she nodded, it seemed that they were just having a scene, but it actually was okay. But better safe than sorry.”
I don’t even know if I should be in here. I mean, yes, we all know that not saying no doesn’t mean yes and it’s still rape even if the guy didn’t have a knife. Or do we? Apparently some people don’t. Pricks. Apparently some people don’t, which is part of why I don’t know if I’m supposed to be here, because some people have had really bad experiences, you know? I mean real ones. Some people can legitimately call themselves rape victims, or survivors, or at least put a name on it.

What if you said yes but then didn’t say no?

I told him I wanted to, but I didn’t, really, not at all, I just knew that was what he wanted to hear, when he asked what I wanted, and so I said it in that dirty-talk-urge-him-on kind of way that doesn’t really mean anything, but before I knew it he was up for a condom and then back and then IN and I almost didn’t even realize and then it just didn’t really seem worth it to say anything.

There were people around. They could have stopped it. They didn’t know. I didn’t say anything. It didn’t really occur to me that I could say anything.

I said no first, though. Before.

When I knew my brain was going to be gone, when I knew I was going to be “impaired”, when I was setting limits because I knew that I wasn’t going to be there, I said “No.” I said “Not tonight.”

But then I said yes because it was what I was supposed to do. And I didn’t say no again because he was supposed to remember. And then it just didn’t seem worth it.

When people talk about rape or sexual assault I feel a strange sense of kinship/horror/reverb/this-is-a-bad-thing-that-happened, and then I feel guilty. Do I have a right to feel that kinship? Do I count? Or am I really just indecisive, could I have stopped it, sorry-sweetheart-don’t-say-it-if-you-don’t-mean-it, you-got-yourself-in-that-spot-in-the-first-place.

Writing it out, I think I deserve to be here. I think I count. I think what happened to me, counts. But I’m going to walk away from this piece of paper and I won’t know anymore. I will never feel right calling it rape.
I have never talked about the time I lost my virginity. Not even my closest friends at Harvard, people I’ve loved and adored for years that feel like several lifetimes, know the whole story—and why? Sometimes I feel it’s an incident I’ve kept secret if only for novelty’s sake: a memory I left behind with high school, just another corollary in the zeitgeist of beginning anew, simply a part of my history that’s never come up. Like the fact that I used to cut, my rape is a thing of the past that I feel oddly neutral about. And that’s the honest truth. I am not saying I have been trying vehemently to conceal all traces of some dark and twisty past, nor would I assert that I am so changed now that I am utterly at peace with who I used to be. Just that, most days, I feel nothing: no shame, sadness, regret. I feel I have nothing to hide, and though I know the mere fact that my story is
still hidden must attest to something, still, deep down, it feels like I just don’t care.

I am a fuck-up. In some sense, I like that—I’m proud of that. I don’t feel damaged or broken, piteous or pathetic. I feel tough, definitely unique, sometimes cynical and dark, deep, intelligent, highly alluring. I feel pretty damn likeable most of the time. When I was still self-injuring, I used to find myself getting indignant when I heard so and so was feeling depressed over this and that, as if I were some ultimate queen of misery and despair, the only one allowed to experience dissatisfaction with life. Like no one had a right to complain since I didn’t, like I was some standard of misery up to which all others had to be held. These are not just assessments of my emotions in retrospect: I was highly aware of how I was feeling at the time, how twisted it all was. I have always been deeply interested in the human psyche and how various extraneous circumstances impact it, fascinated by what deeper mechanisms of cognitive function were reflected in this thought or that guttural reaction. Looking back, I wonder if I was just envious of others’ freedom to share what was upsetting them, discuss it, sort it out, and I couldn’t. Perhaps my lion’s pride was some misdirected manifestation of hurt and helplessness: I couldn’t explain it, I couldn’t understand it, and I certainly could not talk about it.

And now, I feel like it doesn’t matter, like it didn’t affect me. But I know on an intellectual level that that can’t be true. I am somehow changed—some neurotransmitter unregulated, some transcription factor over-expressed. Experience can even have long-lasting epigenetic effects, changes in specific gene expression that are heritable, independent of changes in the DNA sequence itself. And somehow, this does not bother me; rather, it elicits what I can describe as at best a mild interest. I marvel at the capacity of the human mind to lie to itself and others in order to protect its own carefully crafted self-image. The image that everyone sustains within him or herself as perfectly normal, fairly well-adjusted to society, if a bit awkward. We are all some permutation of caring, sensible, righteous; we each have our own set of hopes, dreams, and sense of purpose in life. We adapt to new tragedies. Our level of happiness returns to equilibrium, ever-resilient; we live at a state of high elasticity, low vulnerability. What our minds do to protect us is simply incredible.

Maybe I am able to feel this neutral because nobody knows about it. Perhaps it never affected me because I’m not letting it affect me: there’s nobody out there judging me, pitying me, afraid of me, afraid for me, simply because nobody knows. So maybe it’s time for me to come out and talk about it. Maybe I’ll finally feel something. And maybe not.

So here it is. My story.

It was a while before I could use the term “rape—” I knew the boy. We were acquaintances, I might even say friends, although not close. This was before I knew that an estimated 80% of people who have been raped knew the offender. I was almost seventeen and never-kissed when we first “hooked up.” Even then, I didn’t want to. I did not like him. I had not yet “liked” any boy—quite the contrary, I looked down on “girly girls” and their “crushes” and whatnot. But I felt I had lead him on somehow. I don’t know why that was enough to compel me to stay. But somehow, when he said, “I didn’t know you felt this way about me,” I couldn’t just say “I don’t” and walk away.

“I don’t and, what’s more, I have no idea how you got that idea. Is it how I act? How I look? What is wrong with me? Am I doing something to deserve this? I would rather just feel a little confused and scandalized for leading you on and not following through, than foul and licentious for somehow having brought what is about to happen upon myself. So I’m just going to walk away now, if you don’t mind.”

Instead, I think I kind of smiled, confused. He didn’t even kiss me, but maneuvered me somehow. I remember he kept pulling me toward the bed, and I could not stop shaking. I think he was shaking, too, or perhaps the violence of my own trembling was moving his body. He took my clothes off, and kept trying to take off my underwear. I wouldn’t let him. He tried again and again. I couldn’t speak, but I remember clinging to that piece of fabric like it was my one salvation from eternal damnation. Finally, I just gave him a blow job. I don’t even

“I couldn’t speak, but I remember clinging to that piece of fabric like it was my one salvation from eternal damnation.”
He contacted me again a few days later, asking to go out to a movie. I went. I don’t know why. That’s how I lost my virginity in the back of a movie theater.”

I told one of our mutual friends that this boy was making advances on me. I didn’t admit to much else, just that I thought he was interested. But she didn’t seem too interested in details. Said that he was probably just trying to “get laid before college.” Like it was the most blasé thing in the world. I remember the conversation distinctly: I was sitting on my bathroom floor, butt on the carpet, legs curled up against my chest but toes on the cold tile, phone positioned between my tilted head and raised shoulder, saying “oh” very softly, before the conversation moved on, without so much as an awkward pause. He contacted me again a few days later, asking to go out to a movie. I went. I don’t know why.

That’s how I lost my virginity in the back of a movie theater.

What could I have been expecting? I was naïve, yes, but I don’t suppose myself stupid enough to have been utterly oblivious of his intentions, given our last interaction. Did I have some plan to make a stand, some scene playing out in my head where I would maturely address him and set things straight? Was I just sickly curious? Was I just trying to do what I thought was “normal?” Was this some emotional version of self-injury? Was I in over my head, or did I know exactly what I was getting myself into? I couldn’t say. Maybe I was just trying to see what I could get away with, what I could do to myself and others, to see if I would really be changing anything, anyway, just a little blip in the otherwise well-bolstered affectation that mankind is a creature of reason.

The abridged version of the story is highly college-friendly. The one time I revealed part of the story was in some sort of Never Have I Ever, Kings, Truth Or Dare scenario. I simply said I had sex in a movie theater and left it at that.

Why did I just say it like that? Why do I let people think I am some wild, deviant, sexual liberal, or whatever the politically correct term is? Why don’t I add that it wasn’t until later, when I had my first and only boyfriend, that I finally experienced my first kiss? Why not throw in a disclaimer, that I did not enjoy and am not sure if I will ever enjoy sex, and that having it was a mistake if not a crime? That I don’t believe in physical intimacy outside of relationships? Maybe I just find giving people the wrong impression funny, if only for its supreme irony. Maybe I get some satisfaction from surprising people once they actually get to know me. Or maybe I am more affected by this sex-is-cool teenaged paradigm than I really know, more driven by the desire to be accepted and popular than I can admit. Maybe I just don’t want to reveal the real me, who is considerably less cool than the has-sex-in-movie-theaters me. Or maybe I just think I deserve everything people might think about me, that those unspoken addendums would just be excuses.

Now you’re thinking, oh, you poor, tortured little girl. But don’t. Because maybe it really was my fault. Maybe I don’t tell the whole story because I don’t even know the whole story. How did I get myself into that situation? Why did I do what I did? I’ve done a lot of looking back, trying to recall the moment and how I felt to determine if I was even wronged. I don’t remember feeling anything—I was completely numb, deadened even to my mind’s own will. I didn’t feel the penetration and I didn’t even know when he came. I don’t know how many times I said “stop” or when exactly I said it—I feel I could have done more to stop it, but it was over very quickly. I just remember I felt cold, and I was shaking uncontrollably, even after. At the time I don’t think I thought anything of it—I don’t think I could think anything at all. I don’t know why it took me so long to figure out what my body had been trying to tell me: that I wasn’t ready. That this wasn’t right. But somehow, I let it happen anyway.

I don’t know why it took me so long to figure out what my body had been trying to tell me: that I wasn’t ready.”

But no harm done, right? I am okay. Not a virgin, but okay. I don’t particularly wish I could take it back, take back my virginity. I have never been the regretful type. Sometimes I still cry about not having anything to give to my future husband. Sometimes I still wish I had never been kissed. But that’s on bad nights. Everybody cries about something or other on bad nights. At least I have something I feel is personally quite cry-worthy, so as to minimize additional self-pity from feeling pathetic for no reason. And at least I’m stronger for it. Aren’t I?
I’m showing sensitivity here, my insecurity, my misguidedness, my desperation for rationality, my self-doubt and self-hate. I know that—I know what comes through in my writing. I’ll just go ahead and break the fourth wall to say I don’t have to sound like this if I don’t want to. Writing is always a very purposeful activity. So why let myself seem so vulnerable, why change the tone of my writing to layer this meek, self-doubting, tormented creature under the woman who was so proud to be dark and twisty at the start of this narrative?

For drama and intrigue? For my readers’ pity? Do I honestly enjoy being seen as crazy or damaged? It’s romantic, I guess, in some sense. What parts of me are real or not, I sometimes I feel I don’t even know. What aspects of my person are invented after the fact, fabricated in some attempt to better explain myself, so that I make more sense to the world, so that I make more sense to myself? Was it ever possible for a human being to understand him or herself, anyway? Or are we all just neurons firing in some massively varied aggregations of response to stimuli, with this spandrel of consciousness struggling to produce logical explanations that account for the inexplicable? I don’t know.

But this much I know. I have always been insecure about people perceiving me as more promiscuous than I really am. I always wonder how that reflects on me, if I’m doing something to bring it upon myself—and, indeed, if I did something that night that made it alright for him to keep going after I said “no.” Enjoying the average college social life, drinking and going out to parties, without being categorized as a certain type of girl and having certain assumptions made about you can prove difficult. I used to think I did not care what people thought of me; to some extent that still holds true, as I am not interested in fostering a certain “reputation” in the Harvard social scene. I probably am not and have no desire to become well known as one type of person or another. But after a while, I have realized people I meet when out at night tend to get the wrong impression of me. Some incidents that come to mind immediately: I am often online around 3 or 4 in the morning, after just getting back from a party, and a male friend of mine would chat me, asking to hang out. He would say things like he couldn’t believe he hadn’t “discovered” me earlier, like I was some party animal he and every other pussy-savvy male ought to have known carnally by now. I felt wronged, but also
guilty: was I staying out too late? Was I giving males free reign to think whatever they want about me, to ask anything they wanted of me?

Another incident that really sticks out to me--I was at a final club, and the man I was talking to guessed I had had sex with eight people, saying it was a “safe estimate.” I remember feeling some combination of shocked, offended and embarrassed; I didn’t reveal the real number because at the time I didn’t feel it was appropriate to share that with a stranger. In retrospect, I might have been ashamed that it was nowhere near eight--and probably never will be. I am hyperaware that I harbor towards casual sex and the people who feel free to participate in it a combination of condescension and jealousy. One more incident: my male friend, with whom I’ve partied quite a few times, expressed shock and disbelief when I revealed I had never hooked up with someone at a party. Again, I felt uncomfortable that he had just assumed otherwise, but the abnormality he perceived in my lack of classic college shenanigans also struck me. I wouldn’t say I was horrified at the assumptions being made about me, some by strangers but even some by my close friends, but I was certainly ill at ease.

In some attempt to discourage people from associating me with the general proponents of hook up culture, I have quit drinking entirely--I haven’t imbibed a single drop of alcohol since the last day of Freshman year. Since then, on two separate occasions, I have had a stranger try to kiss me at the party, started crying, and had to leave. Sobriety gives me free reign to think of all the things wrong with humanity for creating people who would make out with an utter stranger, and also all the things wrong with myself, for having no desire to make out with anything. Maybe I was in better shape when I was drunk every weekend.

So if it isn’t the drinking that was promoting this wrong impression of me, what was it? What was I doing wrong? What could I change next? I wrestle with this question to this very day. I have one female friend who drinks and goes out weekly, but I doubt anyone would ever assume she had had sex with eight guys, and I wonder how she does it. What is it about her that exempts them from judgmental eyes and lustful hands, even when she goes out wearing a white shirt with a bright pink bra utterly visible underneath?

For a while I thought maybe there really was something about me that warranted all this negative association. After all, there were other girls who didn’t seem to have a problem with it. Perhaps I had no basis in feeling wronged when I got treated like a slut. I never would have written down this story. What finally made me change my mind was not another male misinterpreting me, but one of my female friends, right here at Harvard: she told me she had been raped. And I judged her. I was sickened by her, I hated her, I was disgusted with her, I blamed her like I had blamed myself. Why?

Because she drank. Because she went to parties. Because she had an active sex life. Because she’s a tall, voluptuous, attractive girl. Because one of our mutual male friends had described her as “DTF.” Because she dressed sexy when she went out. Because she liked gossip, because she liked drama, because she liked nice clothes and cute boys.

Because she was female.

Because I was jealous of her. Because I saw myself in her. Because admitting she was raped meant admitting I had been raped.

And that’s when I realized I needed, first to respect the fact that I was raped, and then to show others that I was raped. That she was raped. That rape happens--that normal people, normal girls who go to parties and live perfectly happy, well-adjusted lives, can be victims. I needed to write down my story. Because you need to know what it’s like--the ambiguity--the complexity--the pain. And you need to know how terribly, terribly easy it is to hate a woman. I know I am judgmental of other women who may be more sexually open or active than I, and I strive every day to change that. To somehow reconcile my own principles with the existence of girls who may not share them, but are still deserving of respect, understanding, and compassion. And I hope somehow, the people who read this will realize they are also full of hate and do the same.
If you could say something to a perpetrator, what would you say?

“Ughhh so many things! Just stop! This is a person, a human being, a soul—not just a body. They are their body. You are raping a person’s soul. You are ruining a life. Why do you think you can ruin a life? Why can you take away a person’s hopes and dreams for your own sexual pleasure? Why are you so important? This is someone’s sister, mother, best friend, mentor, neighbor—this could be your sister, mother, best friend, mentor, neighbor.”

“Do you realize the terrible cycle of fear and mistrust that you are creating? Do you have a sister or a mom?”

“It’s difficult for me to articulate, except that the fact of sexual assault and rape helped me justify anger, deeply and irrevocably, as an emotion. I cannot think of what to say—I am speechless; I am afraid that a physical gesture might replace my words. It won’t of course, but see how easily violence comes around? You caused this, perpetrator—I don’t care what anybody did to you.

I blame nobody but you.”
DEAR PROFESSOR,

I’m writing to you because I’ve observed that you frequently display and play with power, and it is important to me to communicate to you why those sorts of power shows and the beliefs that underwrite them are problematic for me. I suspect that my asking you to think about these issues will feel like an imposition. I believe, though, with the same fervor I bring to academic work, that the perspective I have to offer can only be of use to you professionally and personally.

Recently, I communicated to you about encounters I’ve had with abuses of power, and you responded that you had no idea what I meant. The tenor of the response, particularly the fact that you said you did not understand but did not ask for further explanation, suggested to me that you did not wish to know more. I think it is important for you to understand the context out of which I speak, so I’m going to elaborate on what I meant.

I have had, during my time in graduate school, various encounters with male colleagues in senior positions who have touched and/or spoken to me inappropriately. On the most extreme occasion, I sought assistance from the relevant administration and, after a series of humiliating exchanges, was asked to apologize for having come forward. (I had entered conversation with the requests that the individual in question acknowledge wrong action and that the administration implement reporting and investigative mechanisms to handle such concerns in the future, as none existed at the time.) The compromise was that I was allowed to continue conducting research in exchange, functionally speaking, for silence. The colleague continues to exploit female students. Protective mechanisms have not been implemented.

I imagine that, in the course of an intellectual career in which you have proposed new and controversial ideas, you have encountered resistance and challenge and that this has sometimes taken the form of others trying to intimidate you. In that way, we have had similar experiences. The key difference is that one sort of challenge occurs in words and, often, in the public sphere, while the kind of intimidation I am describing occurs on the body and, some of the time, in private space. I ask that you imagine what it would be like to have commentary on your right to occupy the professional world enacted on the private territory of your body.
You may be wondering: What does this narrative have to do with as-yet-undefined exercises of power that I, the student, find objectionable? To be clear, I’m not concerned about you behaving in this particular manner toward me. What does worry me is the propensity, which I see in you and in other professionals of rank and renown, to behave as if you are unaware of the vulnerability of your junior—particularly female, because that’s my lens—students and colleagues. This manifests in several ways. You enter charged verbal territory without the consent of your listener, using vulgar language where a more neutral word would serve. You remind me frequently of your importance by drawing attention to privileges of access and acquaintance. And, when I communicate with you in a careful and respectful way about power, you feel free to ignore the implications of my words.

So, to summarize: I do not think you are guilty of misconduct, sexual or otherwise, toward me. I do think you possess an immense amount of power and privilege that allow you, by definition, to proceed without seeing the vulnerability of those who do not have the same power and privilege as you do. The frequent reminders of that power and privilege that come from your use of language, displays of importance, and inattention to attempts to raise concerns all leave me feeling very exposed in our professional relationship: should there arise another situation in which I require assistance from a mentor or senior colleague because my boundaries have been transgressed, will that assistance be forthcoming? Are you aware that violations such as these occur? Do you have the language and conceptual framework to address them? These are important questions for some one in my position. They are urgent. Their answers will go a long way toward determining the caliber of our collaboration.

SINCERELY,
GRADUATE STUDENT
I think the **double standard** for **sexuality** in men and women needs to change. If you’re a **guy** and you sleep around, it’s **admired** or even considered an **achievement** by some other guys—**you’re a "pimp."** If you’re a girl and you sleep around, you’re **promiscuous** and a "**whore.**" Until women can speak **frankly** about sexuality without feeling like they’re judged for it, I don’t think we can speak **truthfully** about sexual assault and **why it matters.** I’ve known **too many girls** in my life who seemed to think they couldn’t **win** a guy’s love and respect—**they felt it was pretty much *expected* that they should have sex with a guy, and that if they didn’t they were being unreasonable. Totally unhealthy attitude.”

“**That a person has total consent when they are drunk.** That sex can be used: as a **currency,** as a **weapon,** as an **obligation.**”

“In my opinion, sexual assault is a **result** of a sense of **entitlement** on the part of the assaulter. Entitlement might stem from **frustrations** or, on the other hand, a sense of **privilege** and **superiority.** As a (straight) male, I have been **shocked** by how readily other males will boast about their sexual activities—**with undisguised contempt, derision,** and **carelessness** for their partner. *"I f**ucked the shit out of her,"* and *"stupid bitch"* come to mind as phrases that I have heard from peers **more frequently** than one might think. Sexual assault will never be eliminated until these **commonly** accepted themes in male sex talk are **overturned. Bottom line: Accepting the language is accepting the action.”

**WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT UPON ENTERING COLLEGE?**

“**STATS** on reporting—**to OSAPR,** the **ad board** etc. **Also,** it should be **reemphasized** again and again that the scenario in the ‘**Sex Signals**’ presentation during Freshman week, is **indeed,** R A P E—**no questions asked.**”

“*Even if its easier to just "give in" and have sex, that still does not make it OK or consensual.** If you feel like you *"have"* to have sex because you gave the other person that I M P R E S S I O N, its OK to still say no. Be direct.”

“I’d like to have known **more** about 1) **where** it tends to happen, 2) **when** it tends to happen, and 3) **who** tends to commit it. It would have helped me be **more aware of** when I was putting myself in **potentially compromising situations.**”

“I had been **exposed** to **bad realities** about the topic in high school... I wish I had known the **scope** of it on **campus**—its **breadth,** **meaning** the different **forms** it takes, and its **depth,** **meaning** how ingrained it appears in the culture.”
The first time he called me "Angel"
I thought it was really sweet.
I didn't know it meant something
or someone he could beat.

The first time he called me "Rose"
I thought he was really sweet.
I didn't know roses shrivel and wither
In his scorching heat

The first time he called me 'Sweetie'
I thought he was really sweet,
I didn’t know he could turn
sour from so sweet.

And now I'm no angel, I'm no longer that sweet,
I'm just the woman who must wash his feet.

And now I'm not that pretty, I'm no longer that rose,
I'm just the woman who must bear his blows.

Some day I'll leave, and never look back.
I'll leave and be my own Angel,
my own Sweetie,
My own Rose
When facilitating conversations about sexual assault, rape and consent I've responded to questions like "How much did she have to drink?" or "What was she wearing?" or "Why did she go into his room?" or "Did she fight back?" by labeling such comments as "blaming the victim." These kinds of questions DO unfairly put the responsibility for stopping a sexual assault on the victim. We don't ask questions like "Why was he carrying a wallet?" when someone is mugged or "Why didn't they swerve out of the way?" when someone is hit by a drunk driver.

Yes, it's true that the likelihood of the mugging or accident would have been reduced by a change in the victim's behavior, but we don't focus on that because we understand that people should be able to carry a wallet or drive without being held responsible for the bad actions of another. Yet, we all too often put the responsibility for avoiding a sexual assault on a woman because she drank alcohol or wore clothing that others find attractive. Women should be able to drink or wear a skirt without risking being questioned just like I'm allowed to drive and carry a wallet.

I'd like to suggest a subtle, but potentially powerful shift in our language when we are presented with these kinds of questions. Instead of saying that these statements "blame the victim" let's say that they "ignore the perpetrator." The point is the same, but the language is likely to produce a better discussion. When we use the word victim in our response to these questions, the focus of the conversation remains on the victim. Our response can actually feed into what we're trying to change. By using the word perpetrator in our response to these kinds of questions, we will refocus the conversation where it belongs, on the person who needs to be held accountable for their actions.
I didn’t say no. (Aren’t you supposed to say no?)
I didn’t say yes, either. (Didn’t I send mixed signals?)
I didn’t say anything at all, actually. (How could he have known?)

I didn’t talk to him that night. (What was there to say?)
I didn’t talk to my friends about it for months. (How was it worth talking about?)
I didn’t talk to my parents about it – and I won’t. (Why would I risk frightening them?)

I didn’t think it counted. (Wouldn’t he have had to over-power me?)
I didn’t think I could blame him. (Did he do anything wrong?)
I didn’t think it was bad enough. (Was I just confused?)

I always thought the common phrases were corny, the sorts of well-intentioned but trite efforts bound to fail at accurately describing something like this. Until it happened, and I found myself reaching for phrases as you reach for rituals in frightening times where you feel unhinged. Because I found that the best possible way to describe it was to say that I (my trust, my body) had been literally ‘taken advantage of’. And that (though I didn’t say stop), my ‘lack of enthusiastic consent’ justified how vulnerable I’ve felt in scared moments since.

I didn’t realize there was such solace in language.
I didn’t realize the doubt was part of the proof.
I didn’t expect to doubt myself.
I remember reading the anonymous guest column in the Duke Chronicle, the student newspaper, in November 2002. Authored by a woman who had several weeks earlier been sexually assaulted in her dorm’s bathroom by an unknown man, the essay still haunts me today—almost ten years later—as she so fluently described the commonplace nature of sexual assault, and the perpetual sense of risk that hangs over the social scene at a supposedly “safe” campus. Her letter first sought to set the record straight on her story, as the Chronicle crime report issued in the wake of her attack did not fully address the complexity of what she had experienced. And it was not simply a case of bad reporting, for the language available to crime reporting in a society of “rape” and “not rape” could not accurately capture the violence of that incident. The original report described “an attempted sexual assault” where the victim “escaped to her room,” but the author insisted that a sexual assault had taken place and that she had not so much “escaped” as her attacker had left her behind, brutalized and invaded, in that bathroom in the early morning hours.

These were things she wanted the community to know, and Saturday Night would emerge the following year to address those nuances lost in translation between our world’s unyielding assumptions about sex, gender, and vulnerability and the stories of actual bodies subjected to the often unnamed terrors of sexual violation. Recognizing that what constitutes “rape” in the legal register cannot encompass the experience of loss and desecration that accompany sexual assault, the anonymous author offered the following definition: “any sex act (oral, vaginal or anal) committed or attempted without consent or committed when consent cannot be freely given (e.g., drunk, passed out, etc.).” (Chronicle Guest Column, 11/3/02) This definition and her invitation for others to share their stories and reflections on sexual assault opened the door for Saturday Night to become a space for exploration of less visible injuries that hide at the margins of meaning.

At the time, I was working as an adjunct professor in the Duke University Writing Program and in Women’s Studies, and I remember clearly the intense but evanescent mobilization on campus in the wake of the attack—the tightening of campus security, the changing of locks, the flurry of letters to the Chronicle expressing fear, outrage, and support for the victim. The author of that original letter described how her assault by a stranger commanded the community’s attention, but she was struck by the silence that accompanied the more commonplace assaults—that often went unreported—in which the victim knew the attacker. These were never cause for widespread lock-changing or security intensification; the most frequent assaults were met with a general silence. Thanks to Saturday Night, the first one of which was launched by that anonymous 2002 letter, that silence has ended.

But while I take some pride that Saturday Night originated at my alma mater, and that I was lucky enough to teach several of the students who helped launch it, it’s hard to summon a celebratory mood as I reflect on the publication’s almost decade-long existence. I wish that this world had no need for Saturday Night, that there were not enough stories of assault to fill each issue, each year (or, for that matter, enough to fill an issue each month). And although I believe that Saturday Night helps speed us down the path towards ending sexual violence, the rate of change seems underwhelming when I reflect on the multiple violences that are still considered a normal part of our social landscape. The voices of anguish and grief, but also of strength and hope, that fill each issue remind us that we still have a long way to go before Saturday night becomes just another evening.
WHAT CAN HARvard STUDENTS DO TO WORK TOWARDS BUILDING A SEXUAL VIOLENCE-FREE COMMUNITY?

“Supporting victims who have faced assault, lending an open ear and mind to their story. Feeling CONFIDENT not only reporting an incident, but pushing it through to the ad board. Make the process of reporting/filing easy, STREAMLINED, and as simple as possible for the victim.”

“What Question question question: Question your indifference towards the LITTLE THINGS - language first - and make a point of it, every day. Question the institutions around you and how they impact gender dynamics, even if you think they are INNOCUOUS. Question the gender role-playing at Clubs, parties, and bars.”

WHAT COULD BE DONED TO MAKE HARVARD SAFER?

“Less of the "WORK HARD, PLAY HARD" mentality. People kill themselves during the week and have this 'all or nothing' mentality that pervades into the weekend. Chugging drinks at 11pm and getting so drunk you cannot stand is not healthy... I think if parties started earlier and were more focused on SOCIAL THINGS (not just dancing in a weird crowded room), people would be encouraged to have healthier drinking habits and therefore be safer.”

“Get your friends' backs. They'll get yours. Get the backs of those who you don't know. Everyone look out for everyone, and DO SOMETHING or SAY SOMETHING if you see shit going down.”

“According to the administration, the Final Clubs are not a part of campus. But they represent a huge dark spot when it comes to sexual safety at Harvard. Privileged, ALL-MALE spaces imply male-defined expectations, which imply males acting on those expectations. The University fails to consider these very simple steps towards safety:

1. Reduce restrictions on parties and alcohol consumption. Many Final Clubs provide free alcohol to underage Harvard students - many of whom don't know members personally - every single weekend. How can REGULATED, secretive dorm gatherings of newfound peers compete with wild fun at a Final Club? De-mystify the consumption of alcohol, and wildness won't seem necessary.

1. b) Publicize statistics of sexual violence at Final Clubs. Excuse the language, but: Why the hell not? 1. c) (Pattern emerging) Put "LEGAL" PRESSURE on the Final Clubs to desegregate and hold them accountable to Harvard rules. Plenty of avenues exist for this action: Hazing laws? Underage drinking laws? City permits for festivities? Figure it out.

2. Why separate men and women freshman year for sexual assault talks? The conversation must be held TOGETHER. Sexual assault is an issue for both genders to face in the same room, face-to-face.

3. Support publications such as this one.”
Saturday Night exists to provide a voice to primary and secondary survivors of sexual violence, and to promote awareness of this violence on campus. Our hope is that reading these stories will galvanize our community into changing the culture that has espoused the interpersonal violence found in this publication. Following are specific actions that can be taken to prevent future incidents of sexual violence:

- **Explore** personal behaviors and attitudes related to interpersonal or sexual violence.
- **Challenge** friends and family who jokingly or flippantly refer to sexual violence and/or its victims.
- **Intervene** if a person appears uncomfortable with sexual advances or with aggression from a partner. If the situation is too dangerous, call the police or enlist the help of an appropriate third party.
- **Communicate** with sexual or romantic partners about expectations and what each partner wants. When in doubt, ASK.
- **Join** campus groups dedicated to eradicating sexual violence
- **Volunteer** for Response, Harvard’s sexual assault and relationship peer support line. Email HarvardResponse@gmail.com or call 617-495-9601 for more information.

ETHICAL DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE

The contributors to this publication believe that all responsible community members should espouse behavior that adheres to the highest standard of ethical conduct. Inasmuch as Harvard University places inestimable value on the safety and well-being of its community members, actions that cause emotional and physical pain, violate the autonomy of another person, and disrupt the community may not be found criminal but are deemed unacceptable. The following ethical definition of sexual assault perpetuates the expectation that no community member shall intentionally instigate or participate in an act of sexual violence against another:

Sexual assault is any sex act against a person’s will, regardless of how that willingness is conveyed. We believe that anyone initiating sexual activity has the responsibility to ensure that his/her partner is comfortable with the activity. This includes behaviors in which a partner is unable to freely give consent through physical incapacitation, social pressure, intimidation, etc. In a community of talented leaders, we ought to be able to engage in mature relationships that go beyond the scripts into which we have been socialized.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES DEFINES SEX OFFENSES AS FOLLOWS:

- **Rape** includes any act of sexual intercourse that takes place against a person’s will or that is accompanied by physical coercion or the threat of bodily injury. Unwillingness may be expressed verbally or physically. Rape may also include intercourse with a person who is incapable of expressing unwillingness or is prevented from resisting, as a result of conditions including, but not limited to, those caused by the intake of alcohol or drugs. Rape includes not only unwilling or forced vaginal intercourse, but also the sexual penetration of any bodily orifice with a body part or other object.
- **Sexual assault** includes any unwanted touching or fondling of a sexual nature that is accompanied by physical force or threat of bodily injury.
- **Sexual misconduct** may also include other serious or persistent unwanted sexual contact or conduct, such as harassment, threats, intimidations, or unwanted touching or fondling.
Responsibility for sexual assault lies with the perpetrators of such crimes. Remember that only perpetrators of sexual violence can prevent sexual assault. However, there are things that others can do to reduce the risk of being assaulted:

- Communicate! Talk to your partner about what you want and what you don’t want in a sexual encounter or in a relationship. Make sure your partner verbally consents to all aspects of the encounter. When in doubt, ASK.
- When you go to a party, go with a group of friends. Arrive together, watch out for each other, and leave together.
- Make a plan (ahead of time) and share it with your friends. Consider how much you plan to drink, how far you want to go sexually, and what kind of secret ‘help’ signal will let your friends know if or when you would like for them to intervene and get you out of a situation.
- Trust your instincts. If a person seems shady or a situation doesn’t feel right, then it probably isn’t. Get to a safe place.
- Drink in moderation and know your limits. Don’t leave your beverage unattended or accept a drink from an open container.
- Challenge a culture that supports rape. (Bystander intervention statement).

RELATIONSHIP (DATING) VIOLENCE

Relationship violence (also known as intimate partner, domestic or dating violence) is a pattern of controlling behaviors exerted by one partner over the other. This control can take many forms, including verbal abuse, physical battering, sexual assault and emotional abuse. Intimate partner violence occurs in all socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, national and religious groups. It occurs in heterosexual and same-sex relationships at about the same rates. It affects people of all ages, genders, and physical abilities. If you or someone you know is in a relationship that is abusive or unhealthy, contact one of the resources listed on the reverse side. Above all, remember that absolutely no one has the right to cause emotional or physical harm. If you are unsure what to do, you have many options—do not be afraid to seek help. If you are concerned about a friend or loved one, or recognize signs of abuse in any relationship, please contact one of the campus resources (see p. 28-29) for support and information.

A Relationship Bill of Rights:
- I have the right to an equal relationship with my partner
- I have the right to choose not to be physically or sexually intimate with my partner at any time
- I have the right to change my mind
- I have the right to be myself as long as I am respectful of others
- I have the right to be respected
- I have the right to terminate a relationship when my feelings change
- I have the right to reject unwanted attention
- I have the right to say “no” and have my decision be respected
RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

WHY MEN SHOULD CARE ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Men rape: The vast majority of sexual violence, and violence in general, is committed by men. Even when men are victimized, it is most often by male perpetrators.
- Men are raped: Studies show that 10-20% of men are the victims of sexual violence at some point in their lifetimes.
- Rape confines men: The staggering level of male-committed violence fosters a society in which relationships with men are often approached with fear and mistrust, and where all men are labeled “potential rapists.”
- Men know survivors: Given the frequency of sexual violence perpetrated across this country every year, it is likely that every man is close to someone who has survived sexual violence.
- Men can stop rape: Beyond rapists making conscious choices to avoid using sex as a tool of power, all men can play a vital role in the process of challenging rape-supportive attitudes and behaviors, as well as raising awareness about the damaging impact of sexual violence.

10 THINGS MEN CAN DO TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Realize that sexual violence is a men’s issue that affects women and men that you care about.
2. Don’t remain silent: Confront the abusive behavior of other males.
3. Understand how your own attitudes and actions may perpetuate sexism and violence and work toward changing them.
4. Gently offer your help and support if you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been or will be sexually assaulted.
5. Respect women and treat them as equals.
6. Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence.
7. Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay-bashing.
8. Educate yourself and others about gender socialization, gender inequality, and the root causes of gender violence.
9. Mentor and teach boys about how to be men in ways that don’t involve degrading or abusing girls and women.
10. Refuse to purchase any magazines, videos or music that portray women in a degrading or victimized manner.

Adapted from 10 Things Men Can Do to Prevent Men’s Violence Against Women by Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program
Absolutely no one has the right to cause emotional or physical harm to another. If you are unsure what to do or how to help a friend, you have many options—do not be afraid to seek help!

At Harvard

- **Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response**
  Staff at OSAPR can help you access information and resources as well as provide non-judgmental support. 24-hour assistance, including: information and support for students who have experienced any kind of sexual assault or relationship violence, accompaniment for reporting or to medical care at UHS / Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital (for medical evidence collection), information and support for friends, blockmates, and partners of survivors, and other services as needed. 340 Holyoke Center, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138
  24-Hour Information and Support: (617) 495-9100

- **SASH (Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment) Advisors**
  SASH advisers are specially trained to respond confidentially to a report of sexual assault or relationship abuse. There are 2-3 SASH advisers in each yard grouping and House. Contact your house administrators to identify the SASH Advisors in your house.

- **Response**
  Response is a confidential peer counseling service, staffed by women counselors who deal with rape, date rape, incest, abuse and sexual harassment. The Response center is open for drop-ins from Sunday-Thursday, 9 p.m. to midnight in Lowell House basement (Room E-013). Their confidential phone line is available from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. (617) 495-9600

- **University Health Service (UHS) Medical and After-Hours service**
  Medical care, and medications at night and on weekends: Holyoke Center (617) 495-5711.

- **University Health Service (UHS) Mental Health Service**
  Individual and group counseling and after-hours crisis counseling, Holyoke Center. (617) 495-2042

- **Bureau of Study Counsel**
  Individual and group counseling: 5 Linden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138 (617) 495-2581.

- **Harvard University Police Department (HUPD)**
  The HUPD’s Sensitive Crime Unit, which includes detectives from the Criminal Investigation Division and female patrol officers, have been trained extensively in the investigation of sexual offenses and the impact of the crime on the victim. Contact the Sensitive Crimes Unit anytime at 617-495-1212, or call 617-495-1976 to make a confidential report.

In Cambridge/Boston

- **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center BARCC**
  BARCC provides free, 24 hour services to survivors of rape and sexual assault, their friends and family. 99 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139 (Central Square), (617) 492-RAPE

- **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center**
  Emergency room, to have medical evidence collected within 5 days of a sexual assault, 1 Deaconness way, Boston. (617) 754-2400.

- **Cambridge Police Department Sexual Assault Unit**
  24 hour assistance to report a sexual assault that occurred in Cambridge. (617) 349-3371

- **Boston Police Department Sexual Assault Unit**
  24 hour assistance to report a sexual assault that occurred in Boston. (617) 635-4000.

- **The Cambridge Hospital Victims of Violence Program**
  Free and low-cost counseling (individual and group) for survivors of sexual violence. (617) 591-6360; 617-591-6033

- **Middlesex District Attorney Victim/Witness Advocate**
  Contact the DA’s office to explore the possibility of prosecuting a sexual assault. (617) 591-7740.

- **Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC)**
  Free legal assistance for survivors of sexual assault. The VRLC can provide legal information and advocacy for a wide range of issues, including physical safety concerns, job or school problems, privacy rights, immigration status, and questions about the criminal or civil justice system. (617) 399-6720.
In Cambridge/Boston (cont’d)

■ The Fenway Community Health Center
High quality medical and mental health care to Boston’s lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and to those who live and work in the area. A nationally recognized leader in HIV care and research. fenwayhealth.org, 7 Haviland Street, Boston, MA 02115, (617) 267-0900 Toll-Free: (888) 242-0900

■ Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project (GMDVP)
A grassroots, non-profit organization providing community education and direct services for clients. GMDVP offers shelter, guidance, and resources to allow gay, bisexual, and transgender men in crisis to remove themselves from violent situations and relationships. gmdvp.org, FMB 131, 955 Mass Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139.
Office: (617) 354-6056, Crisis Line: 1 (800) 832-1901

■ The Network/ La Red
Free services for battered lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender folks, including a Hotline, Safe Home program, Advocacy program, and Organizing/Outreach program. thenetworklared.org, P.O. Box 6011 Boston, MA 02114,
Office: (617) 695-0877, Hotline: (617) 423-SAFE (7233) v/tty

Nationally

■ Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN)
National crisis line provides 24-hour crisis information and referrals. www.rainn.org, (800) 656-HOPE

■ Men Can Stop Rape
Information about working with men to end violence against women. www.mencanstoprape.org, (202) 265-6530

WHAT TO DO IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS A SURVIVOR

Given the prevalence of sexual assault and relationship violence, we all likely know someone who has been abused, assaulted or violated at some point. While we may want to help, many of us may not know how. Here are a few suggestions for seeking help for yourself, or for responding to someone you may suspect to be a survivor of sexual assault, rape, or dating violence.

If you were recently assaulted: Helpful tips for self-care and action
- Go to a safe place
- Tell someone: A friend, family member, rape crisis advocate or professional.
- Seek ongoing support (see “Resources” section).
- Medical follow-up is recommended to ensure your physical well-being. This can be done at the local emergency department, student health services, or by your physician.
- You have the option of reporting. Evidence collection can be done at the Emergency Department within five days of an assault.
  Having evidence collected does not obligate you to proceed with legal or judicial action and anonymous reporting is an option.

If you were assaulted in the past: Helpful tips for self-care and action
- Sexual assault and relationship violence can have a lasting impact on an individual’s well-being. Survivors may find their relationships, academic performance and day-to-day functioning affected. If you are experiencing distress of any kind, please know that it is possible to heal.
- Tell someone—a friend, family member, rape crisis advocate, or professional—even if you didn’t tell anyone at the time it happened.
- Seek ongoing support.

How to help a friend: Suggestions for being supportive
- Be a good listener. Respond to feelings as well as words.
- Believe her/him. People rarely make up stories of sexual assault, rape or abuse.
- Don’t blame the person. No victim asks to be assaulted; no one deserves to be assaulted.
- Provide support without taking over. Encourage the survivor to explore their options and let him/her make decisions.
- Take care of yourself throughout the long healing process. Campus and community resources are available for you too.

If you think you have hurt someone
If you are experiencing distress because you think you have assaulted someone, seek support. The campus and community resources are also available to you.

- Adapted from Saturday Night at Duke, Vol III
The experience of sexual assault is, for many survivors, profoundly life-changing. Whether a person is assaulted as a child, a teen, or an adult, the effects are far-reaching: a world that once felt safe, manageable and happy becomes fraught with danger, fear, and pain. People who once seemed safe and trustworthy are now suspect. The physical and mental sense of self, privacy, and personal power has been forever shifted.

Survivor reactions to sexual assault have been described and explained effectively through the lens of trauma. Trauma is defined as any significantly distressing experience that causes severe emotional shock and may have long-lasting psychological effects. Much of what we know about the after effects of traumatic experiences has been gleaned from studying veterans of war, beginning with the Vietnam War. During the 70’s, researchers first began to understand the set of symptoms related to what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD. Research on PTSD has helped us understand the way that people make sense of experiences with extreme terror and trauma—how they react physically, emotionally, and psychologically, and how they develop coping mechanisms which help (or hinder) their survival. It is important to understand that these reactions are normal for survivors of trauma, and are not a sign of illness. They usually represent a temporary imbalance of the survivor’s ability to thrive.

In order to arrive at a more specific understanding of the ways that sexual violence impacts life experience, two researchers in 1974 (Ann Burgess and Lynda Holstrom) conducted a study (described in their book Rape: Victims of Crisis) where they interviewed 600 self-identified survivors of sexual assault. Several themes emerged which appeared to be commonalities in the experiences of virtually every survivor. Burgess and Holstrom noted:

*How an individual copes with sexual assault varies according to her personality, her support system, the reaction of the people with whom she comes in contact after the assault and of course, the assault itself. Nonetheless, observation and research have shown that there is a set of characteristic reactions, referred to as the Rape Trauma Syndrome.*

**Rape Trauma Syndrome**

To be an effective support person, it can be helpful to know something about some of the common responses to sexual violations. The following stages of recovery are only generalizations; not all victims will follow the same patterns or the same time frame. Each individual reacts differently; some may never experience certain symptoms, some may fluctuate between stages, and some may become “stuck” in a particular stage.

Therefore, this information should only be used as a guideline, to attain a general understanding of how the individual may be feeling, and what they might be experiencing, in the present. Do not attempt to use this information to predict future stages. Each survivor’s experience of the healing process is unique, and is influenced by a number of life factors. There is no timeline and no predictable ‘sequence’ of healing—each survivor draws on their own resources in different ways to make sense of their experience and progress in their healing. Some survivors may eventually feel as if they are completely healed from the experience of the assault; others may never feel they have healed.

Rape Trauma Syndrome is characterized by three phases of reaction to the event:

**Acute Phase** – occurs immediately following the assault and may last for several weeks, resulting in the complete disruption of the survivor’s life.

*Emotional and psychological reactions* may include expressed feelings of anxiety, crying, shaking, or restlessness. The may appear calm, composed and subdued (known as the ‘controlled’ reaction) which is often misinterpreted as evidence that the assault did not affect the survivor, or that it did not even occur. Cultural influences may also determine survivors’ reactions or the expression of them.

*Physical reactions* may include soreness specific to areas where injury occurred; headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances; loss of appetite and nausea; and infection and pain associated with gynecological symptoms.

*Behavioral reactions* may include disturbances in sleeping patterns because of nightmares or inability to relax; in eating patterns because of a decrease or increase in appetite or nausea. The ability to concentrate may also be affected due to intrusive or recurring thoughts of the event, making it difficult to work, study, or even carry on a coherent conversation.
2. **Outward Adjustment Phase** – The second phase that occurs is apparent outward adjustment as realistic problems and consequences of the assault replace the immediate emotional turmoil. Characteristics of this phase are that the immediate anxiety subsides, as the survivor endeavors to return to normal pursuits and seems to move the assault out of their consciousness. Survivors may utilize denial, repression, or rationalization to help themselves cope with the reality of what happened. Anger and depression may be diminished or subdued. The survivor may want to shift the focus away from the assault and thus may avoid those who they have talked with about it.

3. **Reorganization Phase** – This is the period during which the survivor strives to come to terms with the sexual assault and incorporate it into an understanding of many of their other life experiences. Many survivors describe this phase as wanting to move away from seeing the assault as the defining event of their life. Concerns of this phase may include:

   - **Social Reactions** – During this phase, the survivor may be attempting to re-negotiate their assumptions about human nature, safety, and trust. Friends and family members who have not been supportive of the survivor may be rejected.
   
   - **Emotional/Psychological Reactions** – Depression, guilt, and a general loss of self-esteem are all common psychological reactions. These reactions may range from mild to severe, and it is not uncommon for survivors to contemplate or act on feelings of suicidality at this time. Often, survivors have directed the negative feelings about the assault inward, so it is important to continually remind them that they are not responsible for what happened to them, that it was an act of violence perpetrated against them, and that they are not at fault. Survivors may also find themselves triggered by reminders of the assault—for example, seeing someone who resembles the perpetrator, or experiencing a smell, sound or taste that reminds them of the assault.

   - **Sexual Reactions** – When something once pleasurable becomes something used to injure, humiliate, and terrorize a person, it’s difficult to return to enjoying it without a constant sense of danger and pain. Survivors of sexual assault often find it incredibly difficult to experience sexual intimacy without memories and feelings related to the assault intruding. This may be manifested in reduced or absent sexual desire, inability to relax during sexual intimacy, or a feeling of indifference and numbness toward sex. Some survivors—particularly those who were assaulted by an intimate partner—may engage in a marked increase in sexual activity, which may serve as an apparent means to ‘overcome’ the feelings of shame or undesirability.

Again, it is important to understand that a survivor may exhibit reactions associated with being in one of the three phases, or a combination of the three. They may make significant progress in their ability to cope with the assault, and then experience a setback due to any number of stressors. The most important function we can play in a survivor’s recovery is to help them understand what is happening to them and to normalize their responses to the stress of the assault.

Finally, it is important to remember that rape and sexual assault happen in all communities. Male survivors, survivors of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered survivors all experience similar reactions to those described above. However, they are also likely struggling with the additional burdens of stereotypes, racism, homophobia and other oppressions, often leaving them feeling even more isolated, confused, ashamed, frightened, and less likely to seek support.

**The Restoration of Hope**

Thinking about someone you care about experiencing sexual violence can leave people feeling angry and hopeless. Despite these very understandable reactions, it is crucial to remember the good news, which is that most survivors of sexual violence do heal and will go on to have rich, full lives. Most will come to terms with their experience, and will be able to incorporate it into their sense of self as one feature, but not the defining feature, of their identity. They will progress through changes in their identity, from *victim* to *survivor*. This happens when survivors are given the chance to recognize and draw on the strengths within themselves for coping and healing. As support people, we can augment those strengths with our commitment to listening, supporting their choices, and affirming their worth. This is what the idea of *empowerment* is all about-- acting in the service of supporting another person in locating and using personal power.

“And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

~Anais Nin
The Clothesline Project

Each year on college campuses across the country, survivors of sexual assault, their loved ones, and allies join together to create this display.

If you need help, call OSAPR: 617-495-9100

http://fas.harvard.edu/~osapr/saturdaynight.html