Saturdays Night

UNTOLD STORIES OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AT HARVARD

VOL. 6
Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up this edition of *Saturday Night at Harvard: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault*. If you have read our magazine, or one like it, we thank you for continuing to take part in this experience with us. If you’re new to *Saturday Night*, we welcome you to the discussion. Our goal with these stories is twofold. We want to first expand our understanding of what sexual assault means, where it happens, and how it impacts the lives of everyone in our society. Our second purpose is to call our communities to action. We want to see sexual assault end, and we want you to be a part of this. We hope that by reading these reflections you will feel moved or empowered to help create a world where sexual assault does not exist.

We live in a society where sexual violence radiates from our politicians, media, and, often, unknowingly, ourselves. Our communities create platforms for people like Rush Limbaugh to publically call a woman a “slut” and a “prostitute,” and to expect no repercussions. We witness “slut-shaming” in the media and support musicians who call women “bitches.” Our own use of these words reinforces and perpetuates a climate of violence towards women. We participate in and endorse clubs and organizations that institutionalize this violence and try to make it something “normal.” As people committed to seeing this end, we must steel ourselves against these outrages. As we wrote last year, a lot must continue to change.

In our Campus Voices component, we asked: “What can Harvard students do to work towards building a sexual violence-free community?” Someone responded: “Preach. If you hear something that perpetuates rape culture – a rape joke, a sexist or homophobic remark – get on that shit. Let people know it's NOT cool, it's NOT funny, and it's NOT okay.” This takes more courage than we give ourselves credit for, but it must happen. We hope that by reading *Saturday Night at Harvard: Untold Stories of Sexual Assault*, we all will begin to come together to confront sexual assault and work towards rebuilding our communities.

The *Saturday Night at Harvard* team,

Parul Agarwal, Francis Cambronero, Kristen Cronon, Sam Greenberg, Felicia Sun, and Conor Walsh
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.osapr.harvard.edu 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: Francis Cambronero, Kristen Cronon, Felicia Sun, and Conor Walsh. We also extend a big thanks to My Ngoc To who spent countless hours on the magazine’s layout design, our photographers Francis Cambronero and Parul Agarwal for their 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.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NOTE FROM THE EDITORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NOTE TO READERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>NOTE FROM THE FOUNDERS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DATE RAPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>THIS IS PERSONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>CAMPUS VOICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>DOUBLE STANDARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>WHAT IS CONSENT?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>CAMPUS VOICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>A MAN’S TURN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>WORDS OF FREEDOM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>DOING IT RIGHT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>FAMILY HISTROY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>A LETTER I STILL CANNOT SEND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>CAMPUS VOICES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>MY BODY DOES NOT BELONG TO ME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>DEAR ( ),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NOTE FROM THE FOUNDERS

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
I wake up in a room I don’t recognize,  
I think to myself, where the hell am I?  

A pounding headache, dizzy, confused,  
When I try to sit up it flashes through,  

The image of a man on top of me,  
My fear, my cries, my incessant pleas,  

I went to a party to celebrate,  
My first time staying out real late.  

Alcohol, boys, drinking all night.  
I have a feeling things won’t be alright,  

My friends with boys, I was left alone,  
In a room with people I didn’t know.  

See, I had never drunk before,  
And this boy kept saying “Drink more, drink more.”  

Sit back, you can handle it, go with the flow.  
Was it my limits or myself that I did not know?  

After some shots I still felt fine  
I could still walk in a perfect line,  

He kept giving me more and more,  
Said, drink up girl. It’s what living’s for,  

Have some vodka, have some rum,  
Let’s dance, get dirty, have some fun.  

To this day I can’t deny,  
The evil intentions I saw in his eye.  

But I didn’t care, this chance was rare.  
I could escape from the world, be free for one night.  
Let loose and tomorrow I would be alright.  

I just wanted to fit in,  
Prove I was beautiful, prove I could win.  

I took the bottle, gulped it all  
Soon I was pinned against a wall.  

Uncomfortable, I fled to the upstairs room,  
He said, “really? Over this soon?”
Girl, let me at least come tuck you in tight,
Hug you good-bye, kiss you good night.

Then things started getting really dizzy,
My drinks kicked in, my vision fizzy.

He followed me in and locked the door,
Soon I was passed out on the floor.

After that, I remember nothing,
I woke to the sounds of my door bumping.

My friends were knocking, trying to break in,
Trying to save me, protect me from HIM.

They got suspicious when they heard the noise,
They knew I’d never been with a boy.

But he’d locked the door, turned off the lights,
Lifted my dress, peeled down my tights.

He then reached down, unbuckled his belt
It wasn’t long before I felt,
The thrusting pain; here comes the shame.
Next the confusion of how to explain

I lie there powerless on my back,
He says shut up, be quiet, relax,
I try to push him off, but my strength’s too soft
He goes deeper in, I know I can’t win
I’m shouting, screaming, trying to escape,
I knew, even then, that this was rape
No one can see, what he’s doing to me,
Get off, get out, he ignores my shout
I beg and plea, he goes deeper into me
Inside I’m crying, feel like I’m dying,

I sit there lying alone on the bed,
We’d run all the bases, it was the lingering dirt.

It was his fault, wasn’t it? I was drunk!
How deep in this rut, had I really sunk?

What a monster, What worse evil exists,
Than men who choose to act like this?
But it’s my fault too. I acted on a whim.

I drank the alcohol, and I invited him.
I heard about rape at school and TV,
But it was never something that could happen to me.

It was way too serious, too distant and weird,
I would never be a victim, I had nothing to fear.

You see, I’m the girl who does everything right.
Never drink, never smoke, I follow rules and don’t fight.

This was my first party, my first hoorah,
My graduation celebration, my final ta-dah.

I promise it was not worth looking cool.
Cause at the end of the day, I was the fool.

I cannot go back, there is no escape
At the end of the day, it’s my own mistake

The path I decided to take last night,
I knew all along it wasn’t right
I didn’t have to sneak out of the house,
Or wear that skanky see-through blouse.

I could have skipped and not even gone,
My conscious warned me it was wrong.

I could have chosen not to drink so much,
Or flirt with such a mysterious bunch.

I could have answered my mom when she tried to call
I had the choice. I could have prevented it all.

So what can I tell you to make you believe?
That it can happen to you because it happened to me?

Should I educate you? Scare you?
Let you experience it yourself?
Do you need to get raped to know how it felt?
Don’t surrender your future to one single night.
It’s not worth the nightmares, the recurring fright.
Please, just take care of yourselves, alright?
"I heard about rape at school and TV, but it was never something that could happen to me."
Recently, one of my best-friends from high school made an admission that shocked me. One of her (former) friends raped her. He raped her. This was a guy I knew. This was my best friend. As a feminist, I had always been aware that rape was, unfortunately, a problem in the United States and the world, that it was driven by complex factors summarized in terms like “rape culture” and “patriarchy”. I knew those things, intellectually.

This was more personal. This is more personal. Whenever I face this kind of information, I always want to take control. I told her, research what’s available at your campus. I told her, you know it’s not your fault, right?

There’s always a small part that wishes it was her fault, because then I could avoid whatever she’d done wrong, and I would be safe. But the truth is, it wasn’t her fault. It was our society’s fault, maybe. It was the rapist’s fault, definitely.

So, in the end, there’s not really very many ways to “take control,” because the only person who can prevent rape is the rapist. But maybe, just maybe, I can help in this tiny way. Getting people to think about consent, to think about what it means to respect a romantic partner and how to help people that you think are in danger or have been raped…well, that’s a pretty big step in the right direction.
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 MEANT 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!”

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.”

“A 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.”
Going into college, I wasn’t much to look at. I was just getting through some issues with my eating so being about 20 pounds underweight was not working for me. But then! College happened! And as everyone who has faced the never ending buffet that is Annenberg can attest to: the waffles, brownies and ever-present peanut butter is quite tempting. Regardless, I gained the weight I needed and looked like a normal person. Not only did this bring me a new vivaciousness (since I had the energy) it also brought the attention of the manfolk of Harvard.

Now I know that I am going to sound like the most cliché college student ever, but the unrestricted partying definitely took me by surprise. I was getting drunk…like very drunk…very often. Now I didn’t think that I was giving off some kind of signal that me being drunk meant me wanting to have sex. Yet many guys seemed to think so. Now I went through the same alcohol and sex education that everyone who goes to Harvard took and I distinctly remember that having sex with someone who is clearly heavily drunk is NOT ok. And as far as I remember, there was no way to skip any of the parts in that obnoxiously long tutorial. But I guess there were many guys more clever than I was as an incoming freshman, because they didn’t seem to remember this rule.

I found myself waking up in people’s beds…these were people I never met before, didn’t remember their names, and didn’t even know what house I was in or how I got there. Each time there was that sinking feeling of shame or regret that I did not know how to face. I began lying to my room mates, saying I went to sleep at a friends after the party, or that I was having conversations till the sun came up but I could not lie to myself…which sucked. However, anyone who knows me knows that I am not one to victimize myself. I don’t go down without a fight. I started analyzing the way I felt and the way I was acting and I realized…I wasn’t doing anything wrong!

There are clear differences in the way that society treats a man’s sexuality and a woman’s sexuality. A man is applauded by the number of women he has had, but a woman is chastised…why is that? A man who does not pay child support and abandons a child is barely even slapped on the wrist, but a woman who knows she cannot care for a child and chooses abortion is persecuted…absurd! The rules that have been set up when men cared for women no longer apply! So that took care of one nagging problem that was in the back of my mind. I was no longer ashamed of my number…I wasn’t shouting it from the rooftops…but I wasn’t ashamed.

The second problem with my situation was that I realize that every time I hooked up with one of those men, I had never stated my consent. I think about this fact a lot, and I don’t know if understanding and processing this is better, or if living in ignorance of the fact that I was raped…that many times…is the way to go. Now again, this is not a self-victimization. It is simply a realization that there is no way that society would let me persecute these men. I would be looked down upon as a woman who gets “wasted” at parties. I would disclose my sexual past, which should stay hidden since I am a woman. There would be no proof except for my word. And what is my word worth? I am not worried about my past, but more about the fact that I am so powerless about it.
What is consent? What if my mouth says “yes”, but everything else says “no”? What if I say “yes” once in a sea of dozens of contradictions? What does it mean to be “convinced” to consent?

I read a piece by a woman who wasn’t sure if her experience “counted”. Its resonance gave me some courage to talk. I don’t know if I belong either. I probably don’t. When it happened, I wouldn’t say that’s what it was. But afterward, months, years, afterward things look different.

Each time he asked, I told him I didn’t want to have sex. I tried to avoid the conversation. I knew he wanted to. He was four years older and had been “used to it” in the past. He had already waited a few months, right? He’s stuck around for a while without it and it must mean that I owe it to him. It’s not really fair of me to hold out. A first boyfriend, a first kiss, a first everything else. I was inexperienced, to say the least. Maybe it is my fault for not satisfying him in other ways.

He was older and edgy and a good distraction. I don’t know what I wanted. I just wanted to feel a little more grown up I think.

We were about 5 or so months into dating when he really started talking about it. “It’s natural,” he said. “It’s what couples are supposed to do. We don’t have to do it multiple times every single day, all of the time, don’t worry. Just sometimes.”

“No, I’m sorry, I still don’t want to.”

“Well, just in case,” he said. He wanted to send me home with a colorful Kama Sutra book published by Cosmo Girl. It had pretty little cartoons and was filled with pink.

“No, thanks, I said, my… parents… might find
That part almost felt good. Taking control by giving him something he “wants so bad”

“Okay, yes, let’s do it,” I said. He looked hungry and came toward me. He was going to be inside of me. “Wait, maybe.”

“Okay, whatever. Let’s do it,” I said. He started touching me again, getting ready. “Well, you can’t anymore,” he said. “Because you took so long to ‘decide.’ You aren’t wet. Your body doesn’t want to anymore. Because you got nervous and were indecisive.”

“Well, just…do stuff to…fix it.” He put a condom on. He had to spit in his hand a few times and put his saliva down there. It really hurt. When is this going to be over? Who could ever enjoy this? Ramming it in, flip-

Imagining my future, I gradually divorced myself from my body, my sexuality. It wasn’t mine anymore.
ping me into different “positions”. Please just let it be over. Just orgasm or whatever you need to do to get this big thing out of my body, I thought. I didn’t say anything.

Please, just finish, this hurts.

Eventually, he did. “See, wasn’t that awesome?” I felt more grown-up afterward. Now I didn’t have to worry about someone taking the first time away from me. I felt slight relief that, finally, maybe, he’d shut up and I wouldn’t have to do it again.

The next day he came over, beaming, with a huge box of condoms. The “family pack.” My stomach sank. Does he think that we are going to go through all of those?! Do we actually have to have sex that many times? Isn’t once enough...?

Then I realized that now that I had started it, we’d have to do it more. Now I didn’t have an excuse. I had shown that I was “ready”.

We had sex once again after that. I tried to avoid him over the next few weeks; I was just trying to get through senior fall. I was busy and didn’t have to see him very much.

Soon I started feeling some pain. Three weeks later I had two big cuts down there and I was terrified it was an STD.

What else could it be? I really am stupid. It’s my fault for not controlling my body, for not doing what I should, for not having the self-worth to hold out. How immature.

I told my mom, in pain and embarrassed and ashamed. We went to the doctor. For weeks they couldn’t figure it out. All of the tests were coming up negative and they were confused. There were days filled with uncertainty. The pain I felt while those lacerations healed were just evidence of that night, I shouldn’t have done that.

Imagining my future, I gradually divorced myself from my body, my sexuality. It wasn’t mine anymore. Now I will just use it as a tool. It betrayed me, or I betrayed it. We lost our intimacy, my body and I. From now on, our interactions would have to be business-based only.

Shame.

It wasn’t an STD at all. It was actually just a
physical stress response. Kind of like getting canker sores when you are really busy and not sleeping enough. The doctors rarely saw this, but they were certain that that was all it was. It was literally my body reacting with pain and with passion and with voice. Saying what I wanted to say.

I was overwhelmingly relieved that I hadn’t done something that would mess up my entire future. But, something had changed. Still, the split had happened. My control had been taken and my body had been crowded with embarrassment and shame and vulnerability. Something had changed.

We broke up a month after the cuts. I didn’t even have the energy to break up with him; I just gradually became more and more “busy” until he said it had to end. Thank, goodness. Finally.

He was gone, but my body and mind were still there. Still in pain. During those weeks I felt more vulnerable and embarrassed than I have ever been in my memory. So, something else had to step in to keep me protected: an eating disorder. I didn’t know it at the time, but the divide had brought in something else. An eating disorder that had been only a trace whisper, unnoticeable, turned into a war cry. It took over. To protect me. To feed me so I wouldn’t have to be fed by anyone else. And to keep that separation between heart and body so violation was just not possible.

I have thought a lot about that night over the past few years. I had to enter into treatment for anorexia a year later, and this involved teasing out those shadows. There wasn’t a single cause for my eating disorder. There was a complex web of experiences and environments that tangled into each other. But, there were triggers. There were sparks that lit years of kindling on fire.

That night and the months after – the shame and the loss and the fear – was a blowtorch.

When my mind slips back into the memory of those months in high school, I feel that overwhelming helplessness and desire for control, the desire to shrink away and be protected. I recognize it immediately. It’s the same feeling my eating disorder came to “protect” me from. To ease that fear of my body and of my desire, of being violated and of making mistakes. It created boundaries and kept my impure body from being hurt again. Yet, the protection was empty and violent and, ironically, tore apart my body. It wasn’t the real answer.

I have spent my years at Harvard trying to recover and to understand. It has taken a lot of time. Gradually, I let myself feel anger. It came rushing. It felt good.

So, I don’t know if that night “counts”, to be honest. I said yes. I also said a lot of No’s and a lot of Maybe’s. But I had said yes. It was because of this one little yes that everything was “my fault”. It was because of this yes that I had to find some way to punish and to control myself, to restore the purity and perfection that I had been stupid enough to stain.

Maybe this doesn’t count. But it hurt me. I’m still struggling with the idea that maybe it isn’t all my fault. Maybe his eagerness to have sex with me was a violation. Maybe consent means more than one word.

My voice said yes.

But did anything else?
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.”
I.
For every time I watched my sister smile by day, but cry by night,
For every night I slept like a log, and she was too scared to shut her eyes,
For every second we laughed heartily, for her to only hide the scar he made,
For every day I watched her force out, push down, try to forget,
For all those moments I wanted to scream for her,
To tear a hole in the heart of the world for what he had done to her.

II.
For every time I held my friend’s hand, but she couldn’t stop shaking,
For every night he threatened her, and she was paralyzed with fear,
For every second I prayed, for her to only have one more bruise,
For every day I watched her force out, push down, try to forget,
For all those moments I wanted to fight for her,
To tear a hole in the heart of the world for how he had treated her.

III.
For every time I held my love gently, but she felt smothered by his touch,
For every night I lay next to her, and she dreamt only his nightmares,
For every second I kissed her, for her to only endure his suffocating lips,
For every day I watched her force out, push down, try to forget,
For all those moments I wanted to wail for her,
To tear a hole in the heart of the world for what he had taken from her.

IV.
For every time I was enraged, but didn’t know what to do,
For every night I wished I could stop it, and felt only helplessness,
For every second I wanted change, for me to only fall silent amongst peers,
For every day I watched men walk out, back down, try to ignore it,
For all those moments I wanted men to take a stand,
To tear a hole in the heart of the world for what many MEN had let few men do.
I won’t dismiss sexual assault as a feminist’s issue.
I won’t be afraid to decry a dating culture that fails to protect.
I won’t let my mother, sisters, daughters, friends stand alone.
I won’t let generations pass before we do something to end the violence.
I am a man and it is my problem.
Moonlit beams shine through shrouded shutters,
Clouded thoughts remembered as the mind recovers,
The brain’s feelings expressed as the pen stutters,
Half past midnight, unspoken cries are uttered.
Twisting thoughts that provoke regret,
Many meaningless moments that she should forget,
But is tortured over,
the memories won't relent.
No refunds issued for the time she spent,
So tonight paper becomes her listener,
the pen speaks up for its prisoner,
These words cover the signature
he left on her;
Writing is the only cure,
To free her of the thoughts of him, but how long will this freedom be able to last,
She's not sure.
Yet tonight she peers through the window a free woman,
Clutching a pad, and a pen as her thoughts stand,
Just earlier held down by lingering emotions,
Now standing tall, having withstood the commotion.
She sat up in bed, her eyes locked on my own. Our clothing lay strewn around the room. “Yes?”

I hesitated for a moment to work up my nerve. “So... do you want to have sex?”

It was just that easy, and just that hard. No guessing games, just a simple sentence. It only took a second to say. And at the same time, I was putting it all out there.

We were friends, but not close friends. This was the first time we'd ever hooked up. And I wanted her, at least for the night. But did she want me too? There wasn't any way to be subtle about it. I had to be up-front. I had to ask, I had to be sure.

“Yes,” she replied immediately. She did. And so we did.
Other's prophesy:

Multi-headed beasts
born always of women
will destroy everything

1. Soothsayers born
peddling futures
short sell them
to anyone listening

when I told her
what happened
she knew it was true

It had to explain
awkward hints
multi-headed silences

2. Soothsayers know
destroying everything
requires no mythical beasts
no women for that matter

Men do awfully
fine jobs
alone but together
she caught on

when revelations
sink into your gut
unleash colon spasms
families separate

3. Soothsayers know
to rebuild and live on
death predictions

Soothsayers explain
ture loneliness
among other truths
they spill their guts
I feel broken today. I hate that feeling that what happened had an effect. That I am that painfully cliché girl. You know, The Girl in the movies and songs who was assaulted and now makes out-of-character terrible life choices. We all love to collectively pity-judge her. We feel both righteous and compassionate. But that girl is now me, so I can feel neither of those things. So needy to prove what little effect sex with you had, I am trying to seduce everyone. But it is surprisingly unsatisfying. I feel golden for a moment, but then as soon as his lips touch mine, I am bored.

This sex stuff bores me. Something to be conquered but not so much enjoyed. Any man who does not show interest must be conquered or hated. Everything must be conquered, to counter the feeling that I was. That I did not fight enough. That I did not say the right things. That I sent too many mixed messages. All these things I know are lies, but feel real. I know my repeated “No”s and crying after you came inside should have been enough.

But what about the condom?

As you were pushing yourself inside of me I told you to get a condom. Does my fear of catching something from you mean I wanted it? Why didn’t I just leave the room then?

But you were in my room.

You were my host brother in my room. And I was in a foreign country all alone for a month. I felt trapped. Trapped in the country. Trapped in that room. Trapped in that bed.

Because I knew, if it didn’t happen then, it would happen eventually. You ignored my “no’s” when you came inside me. You could ignore them again. So now, I am trapped being The Girl I pity-hate. But you, for some sick reason, I still can’t hate.
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 could be done to make Harvard safer?

“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.”

“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.

1b) Publicize statistics of sexual violence at Final Clubs. Excuse the language, but: Why the hell not? 1c) (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.
My body does not belong to me.

Clad in slinky fabrics, perched on wobbly heels, it is the property of the man behind me. It sways with him to his rhythm, a half-beat slow, as his hands cruise its contours. Pleased with what he finds, he hugs it in close; dispassionately, I watch it mold to him on the dance floor.

My body belongs to the first man who took it, by force, on the last night of an Indian summer late in my childhood. My body belongs to that small, sweaty room, to the bleak blackness of the hours before dawn, and to his hands, rough, pinning my arms back when I tried to push him off. It should have been under the purview of my youth still, but instead became a part of his adult sex life, his aggression, his Saturday night hookup.

The men milling aimlessly on the streets of Adams Morgan own my body with their eyes, their hands, and most importantly their voices. Hey Mami, they call, girl you look so fine. Come over here a second. I just want to get to know you. They look over it, whistling with approval, their eyes lingering on its ins and outs. Their words wrap around it, stripping off my coat and purse, my jeans and blouse and boots, until I’m left with nothing but my lacy Calvin Klein underwear, trying to cover myself from the bitter wind and burning stares.

In the right place, at the right time, the right man finds the wrong girl. He worships my body, not understanding that it’s part of a fallen pantheon, the girls who’ve had their choice stripped away. He doesn’t see that he deserves better than my body, a used husk, tainted with guilt and fading memories. There’s too much to say, no words to justify, no way to connect the person I am to the body that is no longer mine to give.

My body does not belong to me.
I’m writing to tell you that I want you to ask me about my experiences with sexual assault. I’m writing because it’s not something that I necessarily feel comfortable talking about, not something that I’m going to bring up over brunch, but because it’s still something I think you need to be aware of. I want you to know that, even without knowing that I’ve been a victim of sexual assault, your life is impacted by my having been raped.

If you’re my friend, I want you to ask me so that I know you don’t blame me for what happened. I might not feel comfortable talking about the details, even years later, but I want to know that, if I did, you’d listen. I want to be able to explain why dating is hard for me, why I’m not comfortable in one-on-one situations with people I don’t know well, even though I have casual sex every other weekend. I want you to know that, when I don’t join in on conversations about your first time or falling in love, it’s because I don’t know how to relate, and I’m worried that my honesty will make the conversation irrevocably awkward. I also want you to know that if I sometimes seem neurotic about things like consent, communication and honesty, it’s because, more than anything, I never want you to know firsthand what this is like.

If you’re my lover, my significant other, or just my one-night stand, I want you to ask me because honest communication is an essential part of any good sexual relationship. I need to know that if at any point I say stop, you won’t think twice. I want you to understand that consent is important, and that it should be given freely and enthusiastically. I want you to know that, when your complements and flirting unsettle me, it’s really nothing personal. You don’t have to worry; I’m really not going to call a time-out between second and third base for a twenty-minute monologue about some sorry, blurry night that, most of the time, I’d rather forget. I just want you to ask so that, even if you’re only in my life for the better part of an evening, you understand how prevalent, and how scar-
ring, sexual assault really is. I want you to know that it happens, so that you look out and stand up for other girls, to keep them from ending up like me.

If you’re part of my family, I want you to ask me even though it’s a conversation neither of us wants to have. I want you to ask me even if we’ve never talked about my sex life—although, really, that’s a conversation we should have, too—and I want you to ask me even if I can’t bring myself to answer. I don’t want you to ask so that you can tell me that I shouldn’t have been drinking, shouldn’t have been wearing that, shouldn’t have been at that party; I don’t want you to ask so that you can tell me you’ll find me a good therapist, that you’ll call our lawyer, that you’ll kill the man who did this horrible thing to your little girl. I want you to ask because, in asking, you’re telling me that you still love me regardless of the answer, that you’re willing to discuss something neither of us will enjoy because it matters, and because I matter, which is something I find myself questioning all of the time. I want you to ask because it lets me know that I didn’t lose everything in your eyes when I lost my virginity.

You might be wondering how you’ve known me for all this time and yet never wondered. Maybe you have wondered, and just never felt comfortable asking. Maybe you had no idea. Either way, this is your chance to start a conversation. I might pretend not to hear you, or brush you off with excuses; I might pour my heart out to you the next time we’re drunk together, I might have a real and serious conversation with you about how my life was turned upside-down by one man’s choice to take away my own. I might not want to talk about it then, or ever, but that doesn’t mean I don’t need to know that you’d listen.

So, go ahead. Ask me about my experiences with sexual assault.
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.
- **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 617-495-9600 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.
RESOURCES AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

RISK REDUCTION: GUIDELINES TO MINIMIZE THE RISK OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

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.

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, block-mates, and partners of survivors, and other services as needed. 731 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) 492-8306. Hot-line 1-(800)-841-8371.

■ **Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center**
  Emergency room, to have medical evidence collected within 5 days of a sexual assault, 330 Brookline Ave, (617)667-2323.

■ **Cambridge Police Department Sexual Assault Unit**
  24 hour assistance to report a sexual assault that occurred in Cambridge. (617) 349-3393.

■ **Boston Police Department Sexual Assault Unit**
  24 hour assistance to report a sexual assault that occurred in Boston. (617) 343-4400.

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

■ **Middlesex District Attorney Victim/Witness Advocate**
  Contact the DA’s office to explore the possibility of prosecuting a sexual assault. (781) 897-8490.

■ **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, 16 Haviland Street, Boston, MA 02115, (617) 267-0159 Toll-Free Hot-line: 1-(888) 340-4528

■ 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) 742-4911 (v) and (617)227-4911 (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.

What to talk? If you need help, call OSAPR: 617-495-9100

www.osapr.harvard.edu