

## Helping a Rape Victim

(RACS' Hotline - 1.800.303.0013 - is available 24/7 for you or the rape victim.)

*Victims of rape may be male or female, although the majority are female. Regardless of their gender, rape victims need support and understanding. Always believe someone who tells you they were raped!*

### Listening skills are important when working with a rape victim.

- Listen in a way that supports and validates her feelings, encouraging her to express whatever feelings she has, in whatever way she wants to. Show willingness to let her talk.
- Make supportive comments from time to time while the victim is talking. Use empathy and respect.
- If she is blaming herself, help her recognize this and cope with the feeling. Be careful to not plant guilt where it does not belong. Being raped was in no way her fault! DO NOT make comments like "What were you doing there?" or "Had you been drinking?" or "Didn't you know what type of guy you were going out with?" These are blaming kinds of questions.
- Help her clarify the problem at hand and focus on what action needs to be taken in regard to medical treatment, reporting to law enforcement, or other problems that may be present as a result of the rape. This clarification will help lower her anxiety level by helping her regain her sense of control. Remember that any choices are hers to be made!

### Feelings expressed by rape victims are varied.

- Guilt - Many victims internalize the myth that they are to blame. "I should have known better... I shouldn't have had so much to drink... If I hadn't been so scared..." It is important to let her talk and try to help her define what she feels. It is important to continually assure her that she is not to blame and that she has a RIGHT to say "no" and have it respected.
- Fear - Help her express and specify her fears. Help her to think through all the things she can do to stay safe. Awareness of choice can give her a sense of control, which reduces fear.
- Shame, Stupidity, and Depression - Perhaps she knew the attacker, and couldn't tell that he was a rapist. Rapists don't look any different from anyone else, and often behave very differently in public from the way they may behave in private.
- Doubting her ability to judge people
- Questioning the trustworthiness of others around her and feeling betrayed
- Finding that she may not be believed and that she receives little support
- Finding that she may have to face her assailant again in classes or social situations

Because of some or all of these feelings, many rape victims do not tell anyone or seek help.