• Rape

Rape is coercing a person into having sex under the threat of the use of force or taking advantage of circumstances that render a person incapable of giving consent, such as when drunk or under the influence of drugs. When the victim is below the legally defined “age of consent”, then the act constitutes statutory rape, regardless of the issue of coercion. The use of force and coercion in sexual relationships is one of the most serious problems in human interactions. One person is forced to submit to another’s sexual desires. In most cases, women are raped by men. Some men are raped by other men, and very rarely by women. Half of all rape cases go unreported.

Women are now less willing to put up with unwelcome sexual advances, and men are becoming more aware of their feelings in this regard. Men are usually, but not always, the offenders because they are more often in position of power, and this sort of predatory behaviour is more typically male.

Rape is a violent crime, an invasion, a frightening experience. Rape affects all women, no matter what their age, race or economic status. All women are potential victims of rape.

Rapists fall into a number of categories:

- A moral, aggressive young men who take by force what they cannot have otherwise.
- Sexually inadequate men who are unable to obtain satisfaction otherwise.
- Men who are hostile and sadistic who are not primarily interested in sex but in hurting and humiliating a particular woman, or women in general.

Victims of rape are now less likely to be blamed for their traumatic experience.

- Date rape

Some boys feel (mistakenly) justified in forcing a girl he dates to have sex if they were engaged sexually and then she refused to “go all the way”. This disregard is especially common if the girl is known to have slept with other boys or showed up at a party where she knew there would be drinking and drugs. The use of pressuring and force in sexual interactions, under any circumstance is not acceptable. Whatever the relationship, when a woman says no, a man must stop. Although he may feel frustrated, let down, or betrayed, he should use talk, not force, to express his feelings.
- **The Rapist**

From all walks of life. Never be fooled into thinking that rapists are unemployed, rough, tough, unshaven maniacs. The scary part is, they’re NOT. Reports show that some are teachers, shopkeepers, bus drivers, businessman, doctors, police officers, politicians, respectable members of the community, boyfriends, acquaintances, stepfathers, fathers, brothers, uncles, neighbors – in fact, almost 80% of rapists are known to the people they sexually attack. When family members (including extended family like uncle, grandfather) are the sexual abusers, this is called INCEST.

- **The Victim**

In Malaysia, almost 70% of those who are raped are under 16 years old. Some are as young as 18 months old and some are over 65. Most are known to the rapists and had no reason to suspect that they were going to be raped. While most rape victims are girls and women, young boys are also sexually abused. Anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse.

- **Where does it happen?**

Many people have the idea that rapes happen in dark, lonely places. Some do, but the majority of cases take place in what we consider “safe” buildings – houses, schools, shopping complexes, etc. Even where rapes have occurred in lonely places, the victims have either been forced or lured to those places.

- **When does it happen?**

Anytime! Some people have this image in their minds when they think of rape: “It was late at night, and she had just been out to the pub with her friends, and as she was walking home alone in the dark, wearing (of course!) a short miniskirt, a stranger jumped up from behind the bush and raped her”. Some TV shows reinforce this. The truth is, this is damaging because it makes people believe that the danger is “out there” when the rapist may be sitting next to you!

- **Do You Know...**

Criminologists say that for every report of sexual abuse, 9 go unreported. If there were 1070 reports of rape in 1996 in Malaysia, imagine how many rape and incest victims suffered in silence.

- **What do rapists look for?**

Generally someone who is less powerful than them. This does not necessarily mean someone shorter or thinner than them! But someone they know would be unable to fight back, both physically and mentally.
Someone whose pattern they know very well. It is not true that rapists attack when they get the sudden urge to satisfy their sexual tension. Usually, they have already worked out when is the best time to attack.

Someone who may perhaps trust them enough without realizing what is happening. (Open the door, stop to speak to them, etc.) This may even include a boyfriend, a classmate, or a friend of a friend.

**Myths about Rape**

- **Myth** Women who wear short skirts are asking for it.
- **FACT** No one deserves to be raped, hassled or harassed! Dressing in a particular way does not cause the violence. It is the behaviour of the rapist that causes violence. By blaming the women's dress, diverts attention from who should be blamed.

- **Myth** Men are only violent because they are provoked by women.
- **FACT** Violence against women is NOT the woman’s fault! No one deserves violence. You are not to be blamed for someone else’s violent behaviour they choose to be violent.

- **Myth** Most rapes are committed by strangers.
- **FACT** Most perpetrators of sexual assault are known to the survivors of violence.

- **Myth** Rape is not about sex.
- **FACT** Rape is not sex. It is a crime of violence. It is a violation of a person's rights over his/her bodily integrity, his/her right to decide whether to have sex, his/her right to choose sexual partners, and his/her right to demand safer sex. Rape is about controlling, harming and degrading someone else.

- **Myth** If they don’t yell or resist, it’s not rape.
- **FACT** Rape is an act of violence. The person being raped is often terrified. They may not yell or struggle as they are frozen with fear from what is happening or of what extra violence that may occur if they do.

- **Myth** When a woman says “NO”, she really means, “YES” or “TRY HARDER”.
- FACT NO means NO. Stop when you hear her say “no”. Without her consent, it’s rape.

~ Myth Men and boys are not raped.

- FACT There are cases of men and boys having been raped. Most often, they are raped by other men, and boys can be raped anywhere – in homes, prisons and on the streets.

~ Myth Drugs and alcohol causes rape.

- FACT There are no excuses. You are always responsible for your behaviour, including how much alcohol and drugs you consume. You are always responsible for what you do when you are under the influence of alcohol or any drugs. Blaming rape on alcohol or drugs is a cop-out.

~ Myth Once a man is turned on, he can’t control himself.

- FACT Rape is a choice of control and degrading another person. Many rapes are planned beforehand. Men can control their sexual urges. No matter how much a man is turned on, there are no excuses.

• Minimising the chances of being assaulted

Remember: You can only MINIMISE the chances of being attacked, but you can't PREVENT it. Only the rapist can “prevent” a rape. In other words, do not blame yourself or a person who has been abused or assaulted. Blame the criminal – the rapist!

By being aware, a woman can reduce the likelihood of becoming a rape victim. But it does not mean that all rape can be prevented. Rapists commit rape – not victims.

- Psychological preparedness

- Accept the fact that you are a potential rape victim. Many women operate under the illusion “it will never happen to me”.
- Educate yourself concerning rape prevention tactics.
- Become familiar with community rape prevention and counselling.

- Become aware of locations and situations where rape is more likely to occur and avoid them, or take precautions.
Be aware of your surroundings (cars, people, suspicious circumstances, etc). If something seems odd and your instinct tells you that something is wrong, go with your instinct; even if it turns out to be nothing later on.

Being in a group helps. But this is not always possible. Again, being aware of your surroundings is the best thing.

If you take a similar route everyday, see if you can vary the route, or the time of the trip. This, again, is not always possible.

Carry a whistle or a can of underarm deodorant spray. When you are scared, sometimes you will be unable to scream, so use the whistle. Spray the deodorant into the attackers’ eyes. Carrying a set of keys in your palm with the pointed part of the keys sticking out between your fingers is handy for poking at an unwanted face! This strategies can “buy you some time” to run. Don’t stay and fight!

If you have inadvertently let someone into your house and you “smell a rat”, try not to panic. Calmly try to get to the phone if possible, ring your neighbour or friend and ask them to come around immediately.

**In a dating/friend situation**

- Trust your feelings. If you become uncomfortable in a situation, assertively ask the person to leave. Do not worry about hurt feelings.
- If possible, let a friend or roommate know who you are with and where you will be. Leave an address and phone number, where possible.

**In your car**

- Keep windows and doors locked.
- If you should be followed into your driveway, stay in your car with the doors locked.
- Sound the horn to get the attention of neighbours or scare the other driver off.
- When parking at night, select a place that is well-lit.
- Always make sure the car is locked, and have the keys ready when returning to the car.
- Check the interior of your car before getting in.

**On the street**

- Be observant of things and events around you. If someone is following you, go to the nearest house or store.
- Walk near the curb and avoid passing close to bushes, dark doorways and other places of concealment.
- Do not hitchhike.
- Avoid short cuts through parking lots and back lanes.
- Walk with a friend if at all possible. Do not walk alone.
- If a car approaches you and you feel threatened, scream and run in the direction opposite of the one the car is going.
- When arriving home by taxi or private car, ask the driver to wait until you are inside.
- Do not jog in secluded areas.
- Know the location of special emergency phones.

In your home

- Be sure to keep your doors locked.
- All windows should have secure locks and frames.
- All entrances and garages should be well lit.
- Never open the door after a knock. Require the person to give his/her name. In the case of service persons, ask for proper identification and refuse entrance if you feel uneasy. Check with your parents/guardians first before allowing entrance. If your parents cannot be contacted, inform the service persons that your parents are having a nap and cannot be disturbed. Tell them that your parents will contact them.

• Terminology

These terms will appear throughout this activity. Some people use “rape” and “sexual assault” interchangeably. This is sometimes okay, sometimes not. Read on to see how they are different or if they are similar.

- Sexual Assault is a very broad term for “attacking someone sexually”. Rape (our law unfortunately defines rape only as “a man forcing his penis into a woman’s vagina”) is only a subset of this larger form of violence. There are other forms of sexual assault, like using objects to rape, oral rape.

- Sexual Abuse (very often, used for children who have been abused) is where the abuse takes place over a period of time. It describes a kind of systematic abuse, where the abused person is subjected to many forms of violence (e.g., being forced to watch pornographic videos, fondled, forced to sexually touch/masturbate the abuser).

- Incest is where the rapists are members of the family. Of course, the term “family” itself is very broad, but generally, this refers to people who are related in some close way to the person who is raped (brothers, uncles, father, step-father, adopted brothers, grandfather, granduncles, godfather, etc).

- “Victim” or “Survivor” or “Violatee” or What? Many people have stopped using the term “victim” as it is very disempowering, and prefer the term “survivor” instead. Some say that using survivor makes it seem as though all “victims”
have “survived” when in fact, they may be still going through the trauma. So, some prefer to use the term “violatee”. Although this term rightly reflects the fact that the victims’ rights have been violated, this term is not widely used. Some prefer to use the word “the abused”, and some prefer not to use any of these terms altogether. Instead, they may use “women who have been assaulted”, or “girls who have been sexually abused” – they are longer phrases but rightly point out the violence that has been inflicted upon them.

Don’t worry if you don’t exactly use the right word every time in the beginning. It’ll be easier as you go along!