

How to Prevent the Sexual, Physical and Mental Assault of Women

My wife was seriously sexually assaulted. In two separate and unrelated incidents. She blanked them out for 15 years until an incident triggered the recall of them and she developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I've spoken with other women over the years that have been sexually assaulted and every one of them had been assaulted by unrelated people on unrelated occasions. The sexual abuse/assault of women and girls appears to be far more prevalent than is currently recognised. It can be prevented, this is how.

Prevalence of Sexual Assault

In helping my wife go through the aftermath of sexual assault and in dealing with what that has done to our relationship and our families lives, I've learned a lot about sexual assault. I've learned that:

1. If the women that were brave enough to speak up about sexual assault, have had it happen to them on two or more unrelated occasions, **the prevalence of sexual assault must be far higher than the statistics say.**
2. **Men don't understand what sexual assault is.** We know what rape is, we don't know that grabbing a woman's breasts at a rock concert is sexual assault.
3. **Men don't understand how serious an issue sexual assault can be.**
4. **Men don't understand how serious an issue sexual harassment can be.**

The prevalence of sexual assault must be far higher than the statistics say. It could be as high as 50%, depending on your definition of sexual assault, it could be as high as 90%, it could be as high as 98%.

Two of the reasons it's so high are that men do not understand what constitutes sexual assault and how serious the impact can be.

What Constitutes Sexual Assault

Everything unwanted does.

Everything unwanted does.

Everything unwanted does.

Men assume it is everything **unwilling**, but **everything unwanted** has some sort of impact, that impact is generally cumulative and can also act as a trigger and/or "the last straw". A drunk grabbing a woman's breasts in a nightclub could be a trigger that can trigger Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and/or a "last straw" that creates a breakdown that destroys that woman's life, relationship, relationship with her children, family, business, it **could be the end of her life**, and in some cases, it no doubt is. Men simply do NOT understand that everything **unwanted** is sexual assault.

Why Are So Many Women Sexually Assaulted

I've had to help my wife deal with what she went through 15 years ago, to understand the impact on her, to understand **what is sexual assault**, and why it is so incredibly prevalent. These are the reasons, listed first, then discussed. At first reading, some appear completely wrong, some controversial and some logically correct. Once you read the explanations, you'll see why they are all contributors to the

problem and importantly, how all of society can work together to prevent the Sexual, Physical and Mental Assault of Women

1. Sexual assault is not discussed by society
2. Men don't understand what constitutes sexual assault
3. Women don't understand they can say "No", particularly young women in their early teens
4. Relationships are not understood
5. There's an attitude problem where "all men are rapists"
6. There's an attitude problem where "women should be safe everywhere"
7. There's an attitude problem where "it may be partly the woman's fault"

After a brief discussion of these topics, I discuss "How to Fix the Problem"

Sexual assault is not discussed by society

If it was discussed, men and women would understand what constitutes sexual assault and there would be no ambiguity in the dealings on sexual matters between the sexes. This does not mean that every woman (or person) that has been sexually assaulted needs to stand up in public and say they have been sexually assaulted. This means that discussion needs to occur openly and honestly about what constitutes sexual assault.

Men don't understand what constitutes sexual assault

Any act of a sexual nature, of any kind, against a woman's (or man's) want (not will), is sexual assault. Men do NOT understand this.

Women don't understand they can say "No", particularly young women in their early teens

I remember speaking to a few women over the years that told me they had their first sexual encounter in their early teens and they didn't realise they could say "No". The first time I was told this, I thought it was bizarre. How could anyone not know they could say no? Then I heard it again and a few years later, again. And recently by Jamie Peck (a model) writing in The Guardian about her experiences with a photographer and not saying "no".

There are no issues when both partners want a sexual encounter, the assault occurs when one partner does not and doesn't have the ability (for whatever reason) to say "no". This can be as simple as not realising that you can say no.

Relationships are not understood

Because no one talks about relationships, teenagers are left to work it out themselves. They often don't have it correct. There often is a total lack of understanding of what a relationship should be. For boys, relationships can be essentially about how much sex they can get and making sure everyone knows how much sex they are getting (even if they're not).

There is no clear, open discussion of relationships and sex. Teenagers need to be clear on what is/isn't a mutual sexual encounter. Most boys would assume anything that's not unwilling is consensual and far too many would even think that if the girl is drunk, that's also fine.

There's an attitude problem where "all men are rapists"

Policy makers and Feminist leaders are constantly pushing the message that "all men are rapists". This causes men who are not rapists (the vast majority), to simply switch off and refuse to be involved in "women's issues". But this is "Societies Issues" and until Society makes a change, nothing will change.

There's an attitude problem where "women should be safe everywhere"

Policy makers and Feminist leaders are constantly pushing the message that "women should be safe everywhere". Ideally that would be the case, but we live in a world where sociopaths and egocentric opportunists exist. Trying to tell society that they should live in a fantasy world simply doesn't work and people switch off if there's no realism in an argument.

There's an attitude problem where "it may be partly the woman's fault"

This is true and not true. A woman is never "partly responsible" for being sexually abused, however, there are things that a woman can do to lessen the risk, such as not walk home alone through dark areas. This is where the confusion comes in for men that feel under attack of being labelled "rapists and abusers" simply because they are men. And this is a major part of the reason why there is very little support from men who are not rapists and abusers. Policy makers, quite rightly say "women should be 100% safe everywhere", but this is not reality and will never happen. Men that feel under attack by being lumped in with rapists and abusers, their brains react to being labelled rapists and abuses by coming up with a defence, however un realistic, the common one being "but there are things that women could do to lessen the risk, therefore she must take some responsibility and I am not completely a rapist". This "defence mechanism" is why men are not engaged in "women's problems" and, on the other side of the argument, why Feminist policy makers say "all men are responsible for rapes and assault by blaming the woman".

How to Fix The Problem

We need society to work together.

At the moment we are having one sided conversations.

"All men are rapists" v "Women are partly responsible".

The Abuse of Women actually starts with pre-teenage boys and girls.

The Problem

1. There is no emotionally safe way for boys and girls to decide who likes them and who doesn't. This causes emotional scarring and exacerbates, and sometimes causes, personality disorders. Many people go through most, or all, of teenage hood without having a relationship. They do

not feel “OK with that”, they feel like “A Loser”. For boys particularly, this can lead to opportunistic behaviour and in rare cases, planned assaults.

2. The impact of the assault on the victim is not understood. “She loved/wanted it” “would’ve said yes if she was sober” etc, etc
3. Society contains sociopaths and those unable to “not rape/assault”.

How to Fix The Problem

This must start in the first year of high school. We must talk to boys and girls about preventing “assaults”. Not just on women, as this creates a “one sided conversation”, as soon as you do this, you’ve lost half of your audience. You’ve lost boys and **until boys are a part of the solution, there will be no solution.**

We must all work together to prevent assaults. Physical, mental, sexual. Kids, youths, adults, communities and society must all work together to prevent assaults.

We must teach students from the first year of high school (and a lesser program in Primary School) about:

1. **The impact of assaults.** Real life examples and one’s that aren’t obvious. Eg. The mother with two teenage kids that develops Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, the mother starts being violent to the father, the family breaks apart, they lose their income, they lose their house, the children are affected by the violence, the mother commits suicide, one teenager commits suicide, a grandparent has a heart attack because of the stress, the father and other teenager now live on the streets. Lots and lots of carefully worded, heart wrenching examples that really get the message across. Not all need to be extreme end results, but very few should be with having very little impact on the victims life, other than to show that after counselling, victims can lead a near normal life. Short films would be the best method as many presenters are terrible and will lose the audience. Short films **MUST** be written by Psychologists with Masters Degrees or PhD’s **AND** 5 yrs or more experience in the area of physical, mental and particularly, sexual assault. They must **NOT** be written by film directors or marketing guru’s. Film directors can produce the written works of the Psychologists.
2. **What is physical/sexual attraction.** It is in essence, a biological response to the principals of natural selection. It is very complicated. Looks, personality, smell, attitude, situation, X factor, short v long term and many other factors, all make up why some people are attracted or not attracted, to others and why attractions change. When you understand the complexity of attraction and the fact that often the X Factor plays a major part where someone simply doesn’t know why they don’t like you enough to be in a relationship with you, it is much easier to not feel rejected when someone rejects your advances. Teaching that you’re not a societal reject if someone says “no” helps reduce the impact of the rejection.
3. **How to ask a girl/boy “out” AND how to respond to being asked “out”.** We must change the culture where “aggressive behaviour gets sex/relationships” and “nice guys/girls finish last”. We

must have a culture where “nice” is what everyone wants in a partner. We must teach people how to ask and, importantly, we must teach people how to respond. “I like you, will you go out with me?”. “Thank you for asking me, you’ve made me feel awesome, but I’m not attracted to you, I don’t know why, I’m just not. I won’t tell anyone you asked me, because you’re a lovely person and I don’t want you to feel embarrassed.” This could probably be improved upon, but a fairly standard, thoughtful response, that makes the rejected person feel like it’s “no big deal” is the objective.

4. **It’s a numbers game.** The more teenagers in mutually beneficial relationships, the less assault. We must teach kids how to ask one person after another for a relationship, until someone says yes and it’s OK if no one says “yes”. We must teach them that rejection is normal and nothing to be ashamed of. We must teach them patience and that people change. For example, asking every person in the school one after another, is not how it’s done, asking 5 that you quite like, within a couple of days and not being upset if all 5 reject you and that maybe, in 6 months time or more, something will change or maybe someone will ask you for a relationship, is how it should be done.
5. **Girls must ask boys out in equal numbers.** This reduces the stress on boys of rejection. It reduces stress on girls of “no one ever asks me out”. If a boy asks 5 girls out and all say no, he feels like a loser. If he gets asked out by 5 different girls as well, he does not, even if he doesn’t say yes to any of them. This will also reduce the “boys are studs, girls are sluts” if they ask/have lots of relationships. Girls must feel safe to ask lots of boys out and not be labelled as sluts (or other derogatory terms). Having an equal standing for both sexes in society also extends beyond teenage relationships to all of life, equal pay for equal jobs etc.
6. **What is an adult relationship.** Long term, stable relationships must be explained and be desirable. (Long term can be a few months for teenagers). What do people do in relationships, what do they talk about, how do they spend their time, is it OK not to have sex and be in a relationship, what’s the difference between a school based relationship and post school based relationship, what is age appropriate and why, keeping things within the relationship. Teenagers simply do not know what a relationship is, many work it out, but many don’t. There should be no need to have to work it out as you go along, you should know what the options are and what you want. One night stands, while they shouldn’t be seen as evil, shouldn’t be the desired relationship type.
7. **No means “NO”.** Boys **AND GIRLS** need to understand that “No means NO”. If a girl gives in to badgering and does have some form of sexual encounter or a relationship, then she is saying to boys “all you have to do is keep badgering and girls will give in” or put another way for the biological brains of boys “girls want it, they just don’t know it”. This is VERY, VERY DANGEROUS thinking. Girls and Boys must be taught that there **MUST** only ever be one, single NO and they **must never change their mind**. (Never as in, OK to change it on careful reflection once away from the situation, or weeks and months later, but never EVER as a result of badgering and being put under pressure, one NO and that’s the end of the matter).
8. **Staying Safe.** This should be EVERYONE’s responsibility. It should be an individuals to not place themselves in a situation of danger. A close friends responsibility to “save” a friend from a situation of danger. An acquaintances responsibility to “save” an acquaintance from a situation

of danger etc. Much like the road safety message of not putting yourself in danger in the first place, but if a friend does, then saving a friend who is too drunk/drugged from driving, everyone must be responsible for saving someone from the risk of physical, emotional and especially, sexual assault. And it must be explained, that there are simply arseholes out there that no matter what we do, they will take advantage of a situation. We need to protect everyone from them and we need to label them something (not sure what at this stage, but something like the “cowards punch” approach which seems to be working for men on men physical assaults).

9. **Reporting Assaults.** Hardly anyone reports assaults, of any description. This MUST change. It must be “report EVERY assault and let the authorities decide whether it’s serious or not”. If someone that is thinking of assaulting someone KNOWS they will be answering to the Police and Courts, they will think twice and those that are unable to control their actions, will be removed from society. We MUST teach kids “report EVERY assault and let the authorities decide whether it’s serious or not”. However, we need the resources to cope with this and we don’t want Police saying “that’s nothing, I’m too busy to deal with trivial issues”.

The end result is that it must be emotionally safe and normal to ask someone (and lots of someone’s) for a relationship, emotionally safe to say no (or to say yes), completely normal to be rejected, completely normal to be in a relationship that does not include sex, completely normal to take responsibility for keeping yourself safe, for keeping friends, acquaintances, strangers safe (and legislation needs to protect “good Samaritans”), completely normal to understand the impacts of assault, completely normal to report assaults etc.

There is more that can be done to help, programs that can be written, all of which will take time and money of which I have limited resources of both. Without the will and support of Governments to make a meaningful change to society, we will continue on with “MORE OF THE SAME”, where very little actually changes. Be the Government that is willing to make it safer for women (and men).