

# creating a culture of consent

Whether you're a current college student or long-time alumna, being aware of campus culture and knowing the basics about consent and sexual assault is the first step in helping to reduce sexual violence and create a culture of consent on campus and within our communities.

## helpful vocabulary

A **healthy relationship** is when two people develop a connection based on: Mutual respect. Trust and Honesty. Healthy relationships are void of physical, emotional and sexual violence.

**Consent** is intelligent, knowing, voluntary agreement. Consent is an active part of our lives long before we are sexual beings.

**Sexual empowerment** is being comfortable and confident in who you are, what you stand for, knowing your sexual boundaries and values in any given situation, all while being able to respect the personal choices of others, even if they are vastly different than your own.

**Rape culture** includes jokes, music, TV, media, language, actions and attitudes that normalize sexual violence, contribute to victim blaming and to the belief that rape is inevitable. Rape culture views and accepts rape as something that's bound to happen rather than viewing the culture of rape as a problem to change. Rape culture exists because we (society) don't believe it does.

**Sexual assault** is any type of sexual contact that occurs without consent. This may or may not include sexual intercourse as some states use the term sexual assault interchangeably with rape.

**Rape** is forced sexual intercourse, including vaginal, anal or oral penetration. Penetration may be by a body part or an object. Acquaintance rape is the same with one exception, the perpetrator is someone known to the victim. Anyone may be a victim of rape: women, men or children, and regardless of sexual orientation or identity.

**Drug-facilitated sexual assault** is generally used to define situations in which victims are subjected to nonconsensual sexual acts while they are incapacitated or unconscious due to the effects of alcohol and/or other drugs and are therefore unable to give consent.

## current campus culture

One in five women are sexually assaulted while in college.<sup>a</sup> Sorority women are more likely to experience sexual assault.<sup>b</sup> More than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault.<sup>c</sup> The majority of sexual assault incidents on campus involve the use of alcohol or other drugs.<sup>a</sup> Victim blaming, hyper masculinity, rape myth acceptance, tolerating violence against women and overlooking damaging aspects of pop culture all contribute to rape culture and foster harmful communities and toxic campus norms that make it nearly impossible for a survivor of sexual violence to come forward.

## shifting the culture

**What can we (sisters) do to change the culture?** **Acknowledge** that rape culture exists. Unfortunately, society makes excuses for coercion and tolerates sexual violence, especially violence against women.

**Take notice.** What does rape culture look and sound like? Ads that portray women as objects. Memes or music that suggest women deserve to be raped. Jokes that include sexist, racist or homophobic language. Questioning victims about what they wore, said, did or how much they drank. Thousands of untested rape kits sitting on shelves. When we understand what rape culture is and learn to recognize signs, we realize that it is happening all around us, all the time.

**Take action.** Talk with your sisters, peers, parents, children, partners, etc. about what rape culture is and how you can help eradicate it. Use respectful language when talking to or about partner(s), and when talking about sex and relationships in general. Participate in community events and social media campaigns that promote sexual assault awareness and consent. Talk with your sisters, peers, parents, children, partners, etc. about the importance of consent and make sure they understand that a person cannot consent to sex if they're intoxicated. Talk with your sisters, peers, parents, children, partners, etc. about victim blaming and supporting survivors. If someone tells you they were sexually assaulted, believe them and support them.

If you are a survivor of sexual assault seeking assistance, please contact your Campus or Community Rape Crisis Center, Campus Advocate or Counseling Center or contact one of these national resources: [NotAlone.gov](http://NotAlone.gov); Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) 1-800-656-HOPE (4673); National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) 1-877-739-3895.

Remember, consent is not grey. Consent is black and white.  
There are two right answers. Yes or no. #iamonestudent