

## Preventing Date Rape

Date rape and sexual assaults are sadly oftentimes unreported. A burgeoning problem on college campuses, these assaults may take place during parties, in the home of a friend, or simply while being dropped off at a dorm. Preventing date rape in these instances requires women to be aware of their surroundings and also understand that any situation can potentially turn into an assault.

Young women in particular must also come face to face with the reality that date rape is not something that just happens to other girls; instead, it is a very real danger that may at some point put them in a position where they have to report an assault or attempted date rape. It is imperative that women do not feel embarrassed, afraid, or fear to get a friend in trouble. Instead, they are helping to protect themselves and another woman who will not become that man's victim.

This of course flies in the face of the gender conditioning that boys and girls receive as they are growing up: girls are taught – implicitly and explicitly – that sexual submission equals popularity while boys learn that aggressiveness is synonymous with manliness. The resulting recipe for disaster can only be averted if both sexes understand that when it comes to any kind of sexual contact, either party has the right to set boundaries and limit the interaction.

Proper self-defense tips that can prevent date rape begin by recognizing telltale signs of potentially problematic behavior in a date. For example, if the date invades the personal space of the woman too early for comfort, this is a tip-off that he is more interested in rushing things along than building a relationship.

Moreover, intense eye contact, possessive statements that lay claim to the woman before a relationship is even established, unwelcome touching, blocking an exit, and returning to this kind of behavior even after being asked not to, all point to a date that has the potential to turn into a date rape situation, if left unchecked.

It would be wrong for the woman, at this time, to go along in order to get along. Now is not the time to be quiet and surreptitiously try to get out from under the situation. Instead, it is crucial to vociferously communicate anger, frustration, disgust, and unwillingness to let this situation continue. While it might sound rude, it is a great tool to preventing date rape. After all, once he is made a spectacle of in a public venue, the aggressor is less than likely to continue on.

Preventing date rape with appropriate self-defense is actually possible by observing five important steps:

First dates should always take place during the daytime, in a public place, and also with a double date partner couple. Both parties should go “Dutch” so that there is not financial expectation. In addition, this is not the time to rely on the new date for transportation. Instead, the woman will do well to arrive in her own car at the date, and leave alone. Women caught at the mercy of a date for a ride home are always at an automatic disadvantage.

Alcohol has no place at a first date, especially if either party does not have a head for it. Sound judgment is the first thing that is lost when imbibing alcohol and a date rape situation is made easier if the woman is hesitant. If the date takes place during a party, and alcohol consumption has impaired a woman's judgment, it is crucial to leave. The best course of action is to call a cab and wait inside for the driver to arrive. This is not the time to accept a ride.

During a date there should be times when sex and boundaries are discussed. While this might not be an extensive or deep discussion, it should at least outline what is and what is not acceptable. If the man seems taken aback by the woman's unwillingness to "put out" on the first date, then this is a clear warning sign that must be heeded. It is time to bow out of the date and leave the situation.

Communication is not something that automatically happens, but must be done with expressed statements. Even if things are going well, there is a chance that toward the end of the date, especially if things got a bit friendly, date rape might still be a very real danger. Before things go too far, leaving and calling the authorities is perfectly acceptable.

Being overly trusting or unwilling to get a man in trouble is oftentimes a sign of poor self-esteem. Women suffering from this all too common esteem affliction tend to attract men who take advantage of them. If a woman appears to find herself frequently in date rape situations, it is time to reevaluate.

Probably the best course of action is to enroll in a self-defense class that helps women of any age, size, or stature to fend off an overeager suitor and prevent date rapes or other sexual assaults.