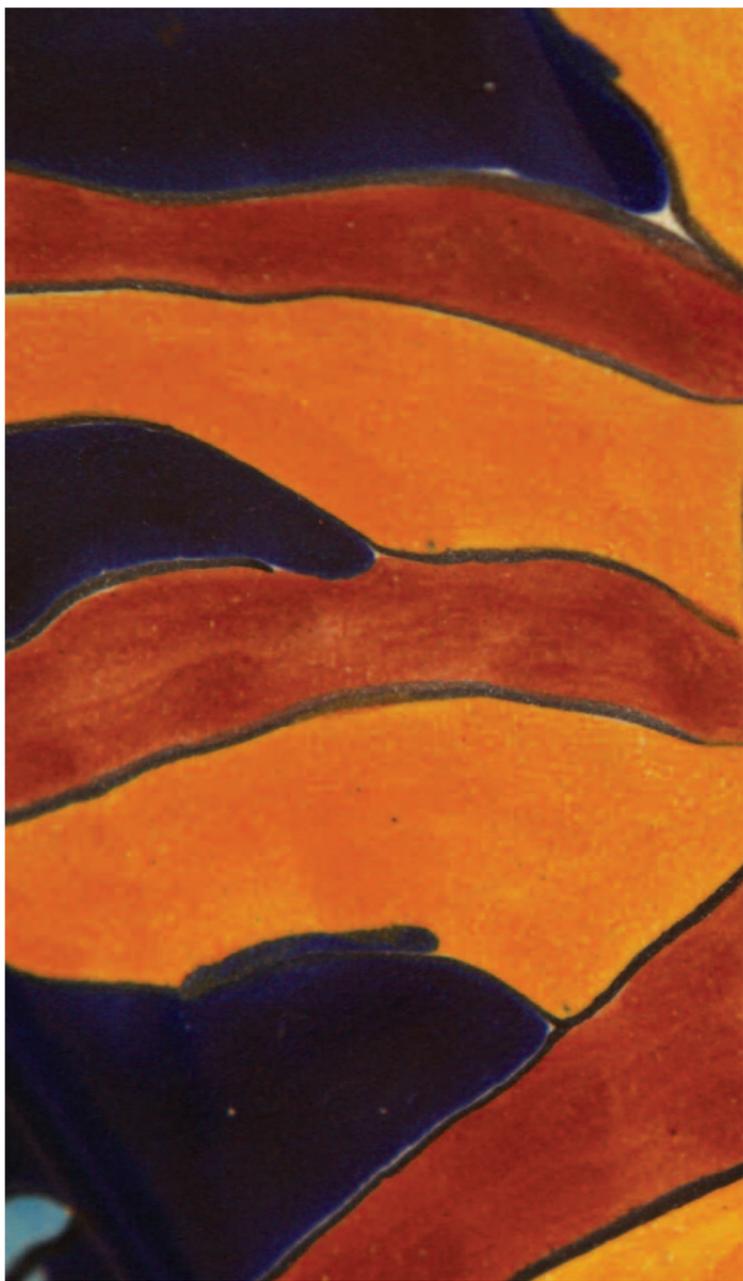




Cold Cases

Time May Not Heal
All Wounds



A Guide for
Sexual Assault Survivors





Being sexually assaulted is one of the worst things that will ever happen to you. DNA science is making it easier to solve cold cases; however, most sexual assault survivors are unprepared for the emotional turmoil that comes with finding out that a suspect has been identified. This brochure is designed to help you understand the confusing and often scary reactions you may have and to assist you in taking better care of yourself.

WHY DOES IT FEEL LIKE MY ASSAULT JUST HAPPENED?

- Being assaulted is incredibly traumatic and often the memories are tied to intense fear.
- One of the most common initial responses to an assault is that the survivor tries everything in their power to forget what happened and over time, some of the memories and/or flashbacks decrease.
- Being contacted by the authorities out of the blue will likely stir up a lot of these old feelings.
- You may find yourself feeling more fearful and upset.
- You may also start to have flashbacks and/or nightmares about your assault again.

- It is **normal** to feel like you are right back at square one again.

TIPS FOR TAKING GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF

- Rule # 1 is *NOT* criticizing yourself for the past still affecting you.
- Accept that at this time you are not going to be able to perform to your usual standards...this is **OK**.
- Try to take things *one day* at a time.
- If you need to sleep with the light on, have someone walk you to your car or engage in any other behavior that makes you feel safer, it's OK to allow yourself that comfort.

Seek support

- Many survivors feel too embarrassed to discuss their assault. If you have a trusted friend or family member, now is the time to reach out to them.
- It may also be a good time to start or resume counseling.

Time to focus on good basic stress management:

- Eat regular meals
- Try to get 8 hours sleep
- Moderate exercise 2-4 times a week
- Stick to your usual routines as much as you can

- Journaling is a healthy way to release your feelings.
- Minimize your use of alcohol and/or drugs.

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP?

- If you are thinking about hurting yourself, it is time to get *immediate* professional help.
- If you feel like you are “out of control” *most* of the time.
- If you have a history of psychological difficulties, extra support may help you now.
- If the fear, flashbacks or nightmares are disrupting your daily activities.
- When you feel like you don’t have the support you need in your life.
- If you have a history of alcohol/drug abuse and/or are currently using substances to cope – now would be a good time to get help.



HOW CAN I FIND HELP IN MY AREA?

- When seeking professional help it is important to find a licensed psychologist or social worker that specializes in trauma work.
- Friends and family can sometimes recommend a therapist, even if that person does not specialize in trauma he/she often knows someone who does.
- Look in the Yellow Pages or on the internet for a local rape crisis center or community mental health clinic.
- Your primary care provider and/or gynecologist can usually provide you with names of therapists in your area.
- APA.org can also help you find a psychologist in your area.
- RAINN has a 24-hour sexual assault hotline (1-800-656-4673). You can call for immediate crisis counseling or to find counseling resources in your area.



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"INTEGRITY...FAIRNESS...SERVICE"

the Baltimore County Police Department



Office of State's Attorney
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the Baltimore County State's Attorney

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