



Answers to 10 Questions Young People Ask



QUESTION 8

What Should I Know About Sexual Assault?

WHY IT MATTERS

Each year millions of people are raped or otherwise sexually abused, and young people are a prime target.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Annette's attacker threw her to the ground before she realized what was happening. "I tried everything I could to fight him off," she says. "I tried to scream, but only air escaped my lungs. I pushed, kicked, punched, and scratched. And that's when I felt a knife pierce my skin. I went completely limp."

If you were in a situation like that, how would you react?

STOP AND THINK!

While you might be prepared—perhaps by being alert when you travel outdoors at night—bad things can happen. "The swift do not always win the race," says the Bible, "nor do those with knowledge always have success, because time and unexpected events overtake them all."—[Ecclesiastes 9:11](#).

Some youths, like Annette, are assaulted by a stranger. Others are attacked by an acquaintance or even a family member. At just ten years of age, Natalie was sexually

abused by a teenager who lived near her home. “I was so scared and ashamed that at first I didn’t tell anyone,” she says.

YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME

Annette still deals with feelings of guilt over what happened. “I keep playing that night over and over again in my head,” she says. “I feel as though I should have tried harder to fight him off. The fact is, after being stabbed, I was paralyzed with fear. I couldn’t do anything more, but I feel that I *should* have.”

Natalie also struggles with feelings of guilt. “I shouldn’t have been so trusting,” she says. “My parents had a rule that my sister and I had to stay together when we played outside, but I didn’t listen. So I feel I gave my neighbor the opportunity to hurt me. What happened affected my family, and I feel responsible for causing them so much pain. I struggle with that the most.”

If your feelings are similar to those of Annette or Natalie, keep foremost in mind that a person who is raped is *not a willing participant*. Some people make the issue seem less serious, using the excuse that it is normal for boys to act that way or that victims of rape were asking for it. But no one deserves to be raped. If you were the victim of such a heinous act, *you are not to blame!*

Of course, reading the statement “you are not to blame” is easy; believing it may be much more difficult. Some hold in their feelings about what happened and suffer from guilt and other negative emotions. But who is best served by silence—you or the abuser? You owe it to yourself to consider another option.

TELLING YOUR STORY

The Bible tells us that at the height of his personal turmoil, the righteous man Job said: “I will speak out in my bitter distress!” ([Job 10:1](#)) You may benefit from doing the same. Talking to a trusted confidant can help you to come to terms with what happened and help you to gain relief from overwhelming emotions.

Annette found that to be true. She says: “I talked to a close friend, and she urged me to speak with a couple of Christian elders in my congregation. I’m glad I did. They sat down with me on several occasions and told me exactly what I needed to hear—that what happened was not my fault. *None* of it was my fault.”

Natalie talked to her parents about the abuse. “They supported me,” she says. “They encouraged me to talk about it, and that helped me not to be so sad and angry inside.”

Natalie also found comfort in prayer. “Talking to God helped me,” she says, “especially at those times when I felt that I couldn’t open up to another human. When I pray, I can speak freely. It gives me a real sense of peace and calm.”

You too can find that there is “a time to heal.” ([Ecclesiastes 3:3](#)) Take care of yourself physically and emotionally. Get needed rest. And most of all, rely on the God of all comfort, Jehovah.—[2 Corinthians 1:3, 4](#).



Your feelings might be too heavy for you to carry by yourself. Why not get help by talking to someone about them?

IF YOU ARE OLD ENOUGH TO DATE

If you are a girl and you are being pressured to engage in unclean conduct, there’s nothing wrong with firmly stating, “Don’t do that!” or, “Take your hand off me!” Don’t hold back out of fear that you’ll lose your boyfriend. If he breaks up with you over this issue, he’s not worth keeping! You deserve a real man, one who respects your body and your principles.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT QUIZ

“In middle school, boys would pull on the back of my bra and make derogatory comments—like how much better I would feel once I had sex with them.”—Coretta.

Do you think that those boys were

- A. Teasing her?
- B. Flirting with her?
- C. Sexually harassing her?

“On the bus, a boy started saying nasty things to me and grabbing me. I smacked his hand away and told him to move. He looked at me like I was crazy.”—Candice.

What do you think this boy was doing to Candice?

- A. Teasing her?
- B. Flirting with her?
- C. Sexually harassing her?

“Last year, a boy kept telling me that he liked me and that he wanted to go out with me, even though I constantly told him no. Sometimes, he rubbed my arm. I told him to stop, but he wouldn’t. Then, while I was tying my shoe, he smacked my rear end.”—Bethany.

In your opinion, was this boy:

- A. Teasing her?
- B. Flirting with her?
- C. Sexually harassing her?

The correct choice for all three is C.

What makes sexual harassment different from flirting or teasing?

Sexual harassment is one-sided. It continues even when the victim tells the person to stop.

Harassment is serious. It can lead to sexual violence.

ACTION PLAN

- When I feel guilty about what happened, what will I do?
- Who is a trustworthy adult I could confide in?

DISCOVER MORE!

Watch the video [What Your Peers Say—Sexual Harassment](#) at www.jw.org. (Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > [TEENAGERS](#))



Learn More



[How Can I Deal With Sexual Harassment?](#)

Learn what sexual harassment is and what to do if you are a victim of it.

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