

When the Rapist is Her Partner

AN INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE TRAINING WORKSHOP

QUICK IPSV TIPS FOR VARIOUS PROFESSIONALS I.E. GENERALIST COUNSELLORS, MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS, DOCTORS, CLERGY AND POLICE

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- IPSV is a frequent part of domestic violence BUT may also occur in relationships not characterized by other forms of abuse ⁱ
- IPSV is not a “grey area.” Rape is rape, no matter the context in which it occurs.
- IPSV does not have to be violent to be rape, but includes coercion and pressure ⁱⁱ
- IPSV concurrent with physical violence has the potential to be lethal ⁱⁱⁱ
- Never suggest couples counselling – this is unsafe for women who are in danger. ^{iv} Nobody would suggest that a stranger rape victim has counseling with her rapist present!
- Never say or imply that the rape is not serious because it was the survivor’s partner
- Unless you have been called upon to make an arrest or otherwise necessarily intervene in a professional capacity, never take it upon yourself to confront the perpetrator – you could endanger the survivor
- IPSV can have longer and more serious impact than other types of sexual assault. ^v The survivor may have mental health or substance abuse issues as a result of living with rape; the perpetrator may attempt to use these as evidence that she is unreliable
- Understand that perpetrators often present as “nice” guys and are good at manipulating people – even seasoned counsellors. Never collude with a perpetrator in blaming or disbelieving the survivor.
- IPSV has high rates of repetition and physical injury ^{vi}
- Familiarize yourself with why women often don’t leave violent partners. Recognise that the danger of rape, sexual assault and homicide increases as a woman is leaving or after she has left. ^{vii}
- Women do not commonly lie about rape by partners. IPSV has particularly low rates of reporting and prosecution ^{viii}
- Never blame, patronize or otherwise judge the survivor – you will be behaving like her abuser if you do.
- Hold perpetrators accountable
- Understand that the survivor may still carry positive regard for the perpetrator – he may not be just somebody who raped her. This of course doesn’t mean the sexual assault isn’t serious. Disregard rules that apply to stranger rape, and be prepared to hear all of her feelings.
- Know your local DV and SA organisations and their referral processes
- Don’t forget the 4 steps: ^{ix}
 - **ASK:** “Has your partner ever made you have sex when you didn’t want to?”
 - **NAME:** What you are describing to me is rape/sexual assault, and it is a crime
 - **RESPOND:** Give details of a sexual assault and domestic violence service, police
 - **FOLLOW UP:** “Last time I saw you, we talked about your safety. I’d like to know how you are now?”

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- ⁱ McOrmond-Plummer, L. 2008, 'Considering the differences: IPSV in sexual assault and domestic violence discourse', *In Intimate partner sexual violence: Sexual assault in the context of domestic violence* (2nd ed.).
- ⁱⁱ Russell, D. (1990) *Rape in Marriage*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Campbell, J.C. and Alford, P. (1989) "The dark consequences of marital rape." *American Journal of Nursing* 89, 946-949.
- ^{iv} Wilson, K. (1997) *When Violence Begins at Home: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Ending Domestic Abuse*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House.
- ^v Finkelhor, D. & Yllo, K. (1985). *License to rape: Sexual abuse of wives*. New York: The Free Press.
- ^{vi} Myhill, A. and Allen, J. (2002) *Rape and Sexual Assault of Women: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office. Available at http://www.aphroditewounded.org/Myhill_and_Allen.pdf
- ^{vii} DeKeseredy, W.S. and Schwartz, M.D. (2009) *Dangerous Exits: Escaping Abusive Relationships in Rural America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- ^{viii} Easta, P. and Feerick, C. (2005) "Sexual assault by male partners: Is the license still valid?" *Flinders Journal of Law Reform* 8, 2, 185-207
- ^{ix} Parkinson D. and Cowan S. (2008) *Raped by a Partner: Nowhere to Go, No-one to Tell*. Victoria: Women's Health Goulburn North East.