Each meeting will begin with a brief psycho-educational presentation on a topic that is relevant to the aftermath of sexual assault. Once this segment is concluded, attending students are invited to share their experience, their emotional status and ask for support from others. At the conclusion of each meeting, additional resources on and off-campus are offered, such as CalP’s for psychological counseling. For each session, participants fill out an evaluation form on which they may write in topics they wish to be addressed in the future.

Whether you are a victim/survivor or a relative/friend of a victim/survivor, please come to the next meeting to listen, share and hopefully gain insight into this very complicated path of healing from sexual assault.

Cont. from pg. 2: Why does no one believe I was sexually assaulted?

further enhances the survivor’s pain and causes them often to remain silent. Their discomfort is turned inward upon themselves, where repeatedly experienced a form of re-victimization.

References

Cont. from pg. 3: Bystander Prevention

References
Why Does No One Believe I Was Sexually Assaulted?

For many crimes of assault, society has no difficulty in drawing a clear line of distinction between right and wrong and/or good and bad. When reading about or viewing a mugger attack-
ing another and stealing their purse or briefcase, the victim is regarded with sympathy and empa-
thy. The legal system provides clear cut guidelines for prosecution of the perpetrator and offers assistance to the victim in an attempt to rectify this injustice inflicted upon them. However, when a victim of a sexual assault reveals themselves, the public response is not always sympathetic and the guidelines to rectify this injustice becomes blurred. Unlike other victims who are believed and not judged for fault, a sexual assault survivor is scrutinized and expected to prove their inno-
cence. They are held responsible for their own victimization and blamed for encouraging this sexual assault upon themselves.

University women who suffered from sexual assault by someone they know, relate endless stores of how they were not believed, even close friends narrowed their eyes and asked, “Are you sure that is what happened?” “He seemed like such a good guy, maybe you just misunder-
stood his actions.” “Did you send mixed messages, confusing him to think that you wanted him to continue the sexual act to completion?” For those reading this article who are survivors of sexual assault, it is highly probable you experienced this line of questioning.

Why do others question the validity of a sexual assault victim’s story? The answer to this question is because all of us were indoctrinated (persuaded) to believe that force or violence could be construed as positive.1 Magazines, movies, books, television and electronic websites present a multitude of examples of a female resisting sexual advances only to eventually succumb because of the persis-
tence of the perpetrator. Often this female character is shown to ultimately enjoy the forceful or assault or there is a positive out-
come to the rape. This is a common myth that women enjoy being overpowered, possessed in a sexual way because it unleashes their true sexual desire.

Hundreds of years ago, artists chose famous rapes as themes for their paintings and statuary. The Romans termed these assaults as “heroic rapes.” According to Susan Brownmiller, the term “heroic rape” glorifies, sanitizes, and aestheticizes sexual violence.1 Poussin’s Rape of the Sabines depicts an episode from early history of ancient Rome when the Romans, unable to ob-\tain wives peacefully, staged a festival, invited the neighboring Sabiens, and, at a signal from Romulus, each violently seized a Sabine woman. The Sabine women were revered as the mothers of the first Romans, thus their rapes became heroic in nature. The pictorial depiction of this event suggested that rape under certain circumstances may be considered positive and heroic. In other words, men are permitted to use force when it is to achieve a positive outcome or reward for them.

Currently, movies, television, literature and websites continue to sanitize and aestheticize sexual as-
ault and glorify those moments when men relentlessly pursue women for much of their lives. Rape and A Half Men is a great example of man pursuing the female relentlessly for the pleasure of sex. Episode after episode depicts Charlie in search of sex and going to great lengths to achieve his goal. Often his prey are not resistant, but heroic. Charlie perseveres until he is victorious. Therefore, it is a better understood when a university male may not heed the “No” of his female victim. Modeling his next actions after Char-
lie, the perpetrator continues his quest, often eliciting the aid of alcohol, to acquire the prize. Unlike the television program that brings laughter, the real-life version leaves the victim helpless, hopeless, and vic-
timized.

Acquaintance/Date rapes are prevalent as indicated by the following statistics: 3% of college women are raped during a 9-month period and one fifth to one fourth of all women experience a completed or at-
temporal rape during their 4 to 5 year college careers.7 In spite of these statistics, it is critical to not forget that males are also victims of sexual assault whether it occurred as a child or an adult. However, reported sexual assaults of men are so few, this article places the focus upon females. Most female student assaults are committed by someone known to the victim, often involving alcohol intoxication and occur in social sit-
tings with others present, such as residence halls or fraternities.

Freshmen females fall prey more often because they are far more trusting and excited about embrac-
ing the purported university experience that includes exaggerated drinking which places them at higher risk for sexual assault. The students who fall prey to acquaintance rape know that what happened to them can never be defined as a positive experience. There are no memories of romantic/holy love and positive intimacy, but rather a forced sexual contact that brought no joy and resulted in humiliation, fear, anger and grief. Sadly, in the telling of their experience, others sanitize, and aestheticize their detrimental sexual experience. Often the victim just hears, “Hey, go over it and move on! Forget about it.” This response only

SEXUAL ASSAULT Bystander PREVENTION

Sexual Assaults affect all of us, whether we are the victim/survivor or a bystander. In working with students on prevention from becoming a future sexual assault victim, there are important guidelines one can follow. Unfortunately, carrying out these actions does not mean that one is 100% sure of never being sexually assaulted, but it certainly helps reduce the risk factor. Here are action steps to assist women in reducing their risk of sexual assault.

1. The buddy system: Go to the party with your friends, leave with your friends.
2. Drink alcohol in moderation.
3. Do not accept drinks from previously opened containers and don’t put your drink down or lose track of it.
4. Talk to your friends about your plans for the night including how much you plan to drink and possibly creating a secret
   “help” signal to let your friends know if you don’t want to be talking/dancing with someone.
5. COMMUNICATION: Talk to your partner about what you want and do not want in your sexual relationship. Making sure your partner verbally consents to all aspects of the sexual encounter. When in doubt, ASK!

The action steps are referred to a Primary Prevention because they stop or reduce the possibility of violent events from oc-
curring in the first place and can be applicable to not only university students, but to females across a large portion of the com-
munity. Secondary Prevention refers to the early identification and amelioration of situations which could otherwise potentially lead to violence and this applies to bystanders.2 Therefore, the focus is taken off the potential victim and perpetrators to the role of community members, suggesting that bystanders can intervene when faced with situations involving sexual assault. The American College Health Association recently issued a position statement calling for college health professionals to recognize the importance of the primary prevention of sexual violence, and to develop strategies to engage the campus community.7

On college campuses, most assaults are committed by someone known to the victim, often involve alcohol intoxication and occur in social settings where bystanders are often present during the “pre-assault phase” where risk markers appear, and if equipped with the correct skills, university students can intervene to interrupt these situations.8 A critically important component for successful interventions are educating bystanders. University students need to be knowledgeable about the falsehood of “rape myths” that support these lies: She asked for it; She didn’t mean to; She wanted it; She lied; Rape is a trivial event; and Rape is a deviant event. Often university students may have received some rape education prior and are more aware, but still have doubt as to the belief they would not do the same harm to others.

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Bystander intervention presents an appealing and promising approach to rape prevention efforts on college campuses. As bystanders, remember if you identify an event as a risk for sexual assault, decide upon an appropriate intervention, take responsibility for intervening, decide how to best help and take action. Your actions might just save someone from the tragic emotional aftermath that sexual assault brings to a victim’s life.