

Coping with Sexual Assault

**A Guide to Emotional, Medical,
Legal and Relationship Concerns
for Adult Survivors, Friends & Loved Ones**



About this booklet and the “Coping” series

Our publications are written for victims of sexual assault, their loved ones, and allies. This booklet provides information about healing from sexual assault, medical options, the criminal justice system, victim rights, and resources for sexual assault survivors. The content in this publication is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for medical, mental health or legal advice.

This publication is one in a series on coping with sexual assault. The original booklet was written by Terri Spahr Nelson and Julie Campbell-Ruggaard with a grant from the Violence Against Women Office, U.S. Department of Justice. It was developed as a national resource with the assistance and expertise from a national advisory council including survivors. We are grateful to the advisory team who shared their input and expertise for the development of our publications. *For a complete list of our national advisory consultants, please refer to our website page at “About Us.”*

Regarding use of language: We have used gender neutral language to recognize the importance of inclusivity and an awareness that sexual assault affects all people. Therefore, you will find “their” or “they” in place of gender specific pronouns with respect that each of us gets to choose how we want to be identified. We have also used the terms *survivor* and *victim*; *rape*, *sexual assault*, and *trauma*; as well as *offender* and *perpetrator*. These terms are used throughout this booklet with the understanding that some persons will have preferences as to how they identify themselves and their experience. Use what is best for you.

This booklet is based on information available at the time of publication. We strive to keep our publications current and welcome any suggestions. Keep in mind, state and federal laws do vary and are subject to change.

Table of Contents: Coping with Sexual Assault

<i>An Introduction to this booklet</i>	1
How to use this resource	1
If the sexual assault happened recently	2
<i>Some important points to remember</i>	3
<i>Understanding rape and other types of sexual assault</i>	6
What are the different types of force and sexual assault?.....	7
<i>Common responses and feelings after a sexual assault</i>	9
Some warning signs you might see in yourself.....	12
<i>Unique concerns for diverse survivors</i>	13
For survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV).....	13
For survivors of same-sex sexual assault.....	17
For male survivors	18
For LGBTQIA+ survivors	20
For survivors of color	22
For immigrant survivors and undocumented survivors	25
For survivors with disabilities.....	27
For all survivors with marginalized identities	31
Minority stress, health and mental health	33
<i>The impact of trauma on the brain and body</i>	34
<i>Trauma-informed care for survivors</i>	36
<i>Medical care, options and related concerns</i>	39
The sexual assault forensic examination/reporting options	40
Medical care specific to males, trans and intersex survivors.....	41
Sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy concerns	42
Emergency contraception and other options	43
Alcohol and drug-facilitated sexual assault	45
<i>Reporting the crime and the criminal investigation</i>	47
<i>The court process and testifying in court</i>	48
<i>Other legal concerns and your rights</i>	52
<i>If it has been awhile since the sexual assault</i>	55
<i>Helping family and friends to understand better</i>	58
<i>Signs of an unhealthy relationship</i>	59
<i>Resources for survivors, loved ones and providers</i>	61
<i>A final message on coping</i>	65

*Whether it happened recently or years ago,
there are many people available to support you.*

This booklet was written by and for survivors of sexual assault.

We believe that healing and moving forward after a sexual assault is possible. If you are ever unsure about your ability to heal from the trauma, or if you just need to talk to someone, reach out to any of the organizations listed in the resources section in the back of this booklet. The helplines are confidential and available 24/7 with counselors who know about sexual assault. Or find a good therapist that understands trauma-informed care and healing from sexual assault. You do not have to deal with this alone.

May you find support and care on your journey of recovery and know that you are so much more than a rape survivor.
