



SEPS

the situation determines the solution

MODULE 1 - SEPS WOMEN'S PERSONAL SAFETY PROGRAM

Some people, especially if you have been the victim of violence, may find some of the subject matter contained in this article disturbing or traumatizing. If you are still in the process of recovering from violence and abuse, you may want to consult with a mental health professional before reading this content. The subject matter is also intended for an adult audience, and so if you are under 18, you should have an adult read the material first (parental guidance is advised for people under 18). This article addresses the subject matter head-on, so reader discretion is advised.

SYNOPSIS

This module provides an introduction to the way sexual predators and rapists behave and act, including how they select targets/victims and gain access to them. This session is not overly concerned with the different types/categories of sexual predators, but rather the practical measures that can be taken so as not to be identified as a target, and the ways of identifying the behaviors and actions of would-be sexual predators, so that it is possible to disengage from them.

RAPE & OTHER SEXUAL ASSAULTS

"The statistics for rape tell a very odd story. Women are least safe at home and least safe with friends, acquaintances, and family...the best thing we can do to protect ourselves is grow older." Anna C Salter.

We all build "Models of Violence" i.e. beliefs about the way various types of assaults occur, whether they be muggings, domestic abuse/partner violence or sexual assaults. Our models are based on media reports, advice we've been given, stories we've been told, our own experiences and those of our friends etc. We often use these models to reinforce a view of the world that allows us to feel safe and comfortable e.g. that sexual assaults happen in remote and deserted places and are committed by strangers - rather than by people we know, and in places where we are meant to feel safe. We trust in these models to keep us safe and prevent us from becoming victims of violence. We also

often believe and trust ourselves to possess common sense, be good judges of character, and follow simple safety rules, such as not letting strangers into our homes.

Sexual predators and rapists use our badly constructed models of violence and the trust we have in ourselves to identify those who mean us harm, directly against us. Every predator knows that it is a generally held belief that people look away when they are lying, and so they'll look you straight in the eye, when they tell you that you're perfectly safe with them, or that you needn't worry that anything untoward is about to happen. Ted Bundy, one of America's most prolific serial killers and rapists, was good looking and charismatic. He knew that people could easily be put at ease by charm, intelligence and niceness and that he didn't fit people's perception of what a sexual predator would look like - as indeed most rapists don't.

We may like to think of ourselves as good judges of character, yet when dealing with sexual predators, we are usually dealing with socially adept individuals who know many tricks and techniques to get us to open up to them and even trust them (even if this is reluctantly and with misgivings) - every woman who has let a stranger into her home and then was assaulted, will have held to the belief, before the attack took place, that she'd never let a stranger into her house. We may all like to believe that we will follow to the letter the personal safety rules we hold to and believe in, such as not walking down dark alleys, not walking home late at night, not letting people into our homes, etc., however we have all made exceptions for ourselves in certain situations and gone against our own good advice. Rapists and sexual predators are skilled at getting us to make exceptions for them, and we would be naive to think that we wouldn't - that is, unless we are able to identify them, first.

Most sexual predators are skilled sales people who know how to get you to trust them and hand over control of a situation to them. They know how to disarm you, influence your choices, and determine your decisions for you. If you feel that somebody is trying to sell you on a course of action, and is persistent in their attempts to do so, then you are most likely in the presence of a predatory individual, and should do what you can to disengage from the situation you are in. A person should be judged by their behaviors and actions regardless of whether they are a friend, an acquaintance, or even a family member - statistically you are more likely to be assaulted by someone belonging to one of these groups than by a stranger e.g. if a friend of your boyfriend/partner comes to your home at a time when they know he won't be around, be equally suspicious of them as you would be with a stranger who turned up on your doorstep.

Gavin De Becker, identifies seven behaviors, actions, or methods that predatory individuals use to disarm or groom you, these are:

- Charm & Niceness
- Too Much Information
- Discounting the word "No"
- Typecasting
- Loan Sharking
- Forced Teaming
- Unsolicited Promises

Any individual who wants to groom you first has to gain access to you. We can use the example of a friend of your partner/boyfriend coming to your house at an unexpected time, when they would know you will be alone - something which should be questioned in and of itself. If a person we know starts to behave and act in an unfamiliar way, we should automatically be suspicious of what these changes mean e.g. if that person used to be hostile but is now being friendly, we should question why this is, rather than simply be relieved that (present and) future awkward social situations have been avoided. Niceness is not a character trait, it is a way of behaving, and predatory individuals can learn how to appear as "nice" people. I taught my 6 year old son how to be polite, how to say "please" and "thank you", he was not born with these words in his mouth, he learnt them. People can learn how to be nice, and although we associate niceness, and to a lesser extent politeness, with good intentions, the two aren't actually the same.

Parents will often entrust the care of their children to people they believe to be "nice", "considerate", "caring", and who would therefore seem incapable of harming a child. These are character traits that known pedophiles are often described as having. In certain cases, parents will be so overtaken by a pedophile's generosity and kindness that they will side with the abuser and fail to believe the testimony of their own child, the victim. Sexual predators, whether they target adults or children, are skilled social players who know how to use charm and niceness to blind people to their true motivations and goals.

If we use the situation/example we used earlier, involving the best friend of your partner/boyfriend who turns up at your house at an unexpected time (you can substitute this example for a friend of a friend, etc.) and a time at which they know your partner would be absent - we can start to see how the grooming process plays out - in this example, the friend is a predatory individual who wishes to sexually assault you. When they first turn up at your door, they may start by being overly polite and even apologetic, however they will also need an excuse/reason to be at your house at this time and so they will have to explain their reason, which is where they end up giving too much information.

The quickest way to disarm someone is to overload them with information, it is also a natural character trait of people who lie - to paint a rather larger and clearer picture than is actually required. When someone adds more details than necessary, it is both an overlaid attempt to convince you

of their story, as well as an effort to give you so much information and detail to consider that you forget to question why they are telling you all of this.

The friend starts to tell you about how they are going on a road trip tomorrow, something they've always wanted to do (this information is "new" to you, neither your partner/boyfriend has mentioned this and you have never heard their friend talk about it before), and how their car won't start - and how it has had this trouble before, but the garage said they'd fixed it - and it couldn't have come at a worse time, etc. (too much information) and that your partner has a maintenance manual that they need to borrow. You have the feeling that you are being rushed and put under pressure by the way they are acting and behaving. Many sexual predators will try to deny you the time and space to think and consider the options and choices they are presenting you with - and this is key, if you feel that someone is presenting choices for you, or directing you to act/ behave in a certain way, they are probably grooming you. Feeling out of control in a situation where a person is rushing you to make a decision on something is a definite signal that somebody is trying to get you to hand control of the situation over to them - this is the purpose of the grooming process.

You feel uneasy and so you tell them that you'll go and get it for them and if they just wait a second you'll bring it for them. They tell you not to be stupid - it'll be quicker if they get it, as they know exactly where it is. This is a subtle way of "Discounting Your No". You have told them how you are going to handle the situation, and they aren't taking notice of it, or respecting it. This is the equivalent of ignoring you when you say "No". Sexual Predators are always testing their targets to see how readily they hand over control of situations to others, and/or won't stand behind their actions (and their statements of "No"). They look to see if they can overturn a "No" into a "Yes". Your partner's friend may state again that it makes more sense to do it their way, and when you refuse, saying that it's ok and it'll only take a second for you to get it they say, "Your boyfriend's right, you are paranoid." This is an example of "Typecasting", casting you in a role that you want to prove is wrong. Nobody wants to be called paranoid, stuck-up, boring, unadventurous, etc. All of these negative roles are ones that you want to fight against, proving your accuser(s) wrong, and predators know this and will typecast you in one of them so that you will behave in a certain way. In this instance, the type-caster wants you to let them into your home. If they really wanted the manual/book, they could have had it by now - when the process takes on an importance above the goal, you should understand that the stated goal i.e. borrowing the book/manual isn't what the conversation is about.

They then tell you that it'll be quicker if they get it as they know exactly where it is, as they and your partner/boyfriend had been looking through it as they were going to do some work on your car. This is an example of "Loansharking", making you feel indebted to them, and owing them a favor in return. Seeing that you're about to acquiesce to their demand, they press it home with an example of "Forced Teaming" - they remind you that you are both close friends of your partner, and at the same time make an "Unsolicited Promise", that you "shouldn't worry, as nothing's going to happen."

We trust people who are like us, and those who have things in common with us; reminding you that you share a common person is a compelling way to do this, especially if the person you share in common is somebody you trust. Suddenly, you are part of their team, and on the same side.

The unsolicited promise. When somebody makes a "promise" to you in order to address an obvious concern that you have, but haven't yet voiced, they are using a sales technique/method known as "closing the doors behind you". A good sales person will know the objections you will probably raise when they try to sell you something e.g. if they're trying to sell you a car, they will know that one of your main objections or concerns will probably be price, so they will try to find a way to take the argument of the car's price away from you, perhaps by finding out early on in the sales process what you can afford to pay each month, and constructing a financing package which you may not like but that you can't really argue against i.e. they have closed a door that you could have used to exit the sale. A predator will know that there will be a request they make of you, which you will feel uneasy with and will want to deny them. By assuring you that no harm will come to you, they are attempting to close a door behind you, which you could have used to exit the situation. If you don't acquiesce to their demand, you will effectively be calling them on their behavior and making the statement that you don't believe their intentions towards you are good, and politeness and the desire to avoid confrontation may hold us back from doing this. If anyone makes a promise regarding your personal safety that you didn't ask them to make, you should exit the situation as soon as possible.

The unsolicited promise can be extremely subtle, and does not have to be overt. I once witnessed an incident in a bar, where an individual was talking to a woman, complimenting her on what a nice person she was and how she had a "good soul", etc. He then informed her that he was leaving, and put out a subtle piece of typecasting, saying, "I don't know what your personal safety limits are with giving someone a ride home, so I'm going to walk." She then responded, as he had probably intended, by stating that she didn't have any issue with giving someone a ride home. Rather than accept immediately, he told her that he was going to walk and that, "sometimes a man just needs to walk and cry", adding in that his wife often said he was too emotional. Predatory individuals are socially skilled and adept at getting their victims to "want" to engage in activities which compromise their personal safety - this woman believed the man to be married, and in some form of sensitive emotional state; certainly not a potential assailant.

As they left he said, "So you don't have any problem giving me a lift?", completely contradicting what he had just said before about walking and crying. He had skillfully got the woman to offer the lift and state that she didn't fear for her safety - he didn't have to raise the question of whether she did, or promise that she'd be safe with him, he reversed it and got her to state that she didn't have any concern for her safety.

THE MOTIVATIONS & METHODS OF RAPE

We often confuse rape and other sexual assaults with sex; we apply an incorrect model of violence to assaults of this nature. Most people believe it takes a rapist a certain period of time to sexually assault a victim. A rape can occur in under 10 seconds - women have been raped between subway stops, during commuter rush hour. Their assailant was already aroused when they either followed their target, or saw them get on the train. Pushed up against someone in the crowd, and then held in position, the rapist was able to commit their assault and exit at the next station, their victim not even raising the alarm or fully aware of what happened to them until afterwards i.e. caught in a state of denial and deliberation. In this type of assault there is no verbal warning, no grooming, etc. and the pre-violence indicators are largely down to the assailant's movement, which can be difficult to detect if they are using the crowd to disguise it.

Taking a zero tolerance approach to unwanted physical contact of any type, rather than trying to ascertain the motivation behind the contact is the safest way to work in such situations. If somebody touches you inappropriately, call it. Don't wait to see if it happens again or what it may or may not lead to. Each time you let something go, you are moving yourself down the path of inaction and reinforcing your emotional state of denial.

There are a variety of reasons why men (and women) rape, from anger to social inadequacy and emotional immaturity, etc. However, all rapists look to readdress a perceived lack of power and control in their lives through the assault, whether that involves sadistic pleasure, or the need to punish. Rape is not primarily about sex, and sadists for example get more pleasure from the fear and pain of their victim than any actual physical satisfaction.

Rapists do not always plan their assaults but may take opportunities provided to them - an opportunist burglar who stumbles upon a lone female at night, may understand the situation to be to their advantage and commit a sexual assault, without having planned for such an event. This doesn't mean that the assailant isn't a rapist, nor that they didn't have masturbatory rape fantasies beforehand, etc., rather that they weren't necessarily looking for a victim to assault, but took an opportunity that arose. Sexual predators live their lives on a 24x7 basis, and don't ever take a day off; even if they haven't planned an assault, it doesn't mean that they won't assault, should the conditions be favorable to them.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAPIST

The three common characteristics that all rapists (and rapes) are motivated by are: anger, control/power and sex, however different sexual predators, exhibit these and understand/manage

them in different ways. Doctor Nicholas Gross identified four main categories of rapist and although an understanding of these types is not particularly useful at the time of/during an assault, it is worth taking some time to study them in order to gain a perspective on rape and other sexual assaults that can help put the more practical advice provided into perspective.

POWER ASSURANCE RAPISTS

The Power Assurance Rapist is normally emotionally under-evolved, having a strange view of the way that relationships work. For him, his victim is already within a consensual relationship with him, or will realize during the early stages of the rape/assault that she is in love with him, and consent to having sex. Like all rapes that derive from fantasy - and almost all sexual assaults start this way, with the predatory individual developing the fantasy through masturbation - the assault itself has to mirror and live up to the "dream". With Power Assurance Rapists, that dream rarely, if ever, involves them hurting the victim, and often they will inquire as to whether they are hurting the victim, or if their victim is comfortable, etc.

They may initially use intimidation - though rarely violence - to force compliance, however once they are engaged in the sexual component of the assault they will behave as if they are a concerned lover, who wants to give sexual fulfillment to their victim. They will usually engage in foreplay and will ask questions as to whether the victim is enjoying the experience. They may ask/demand that their victim behaves as if they are enjoying it and that they kiss them, "like you mean it" etc.

Throughout the assault the rapist is under the impression that their victim is consenting to their sexual acts and demands, and may even ask what they should do to increase or bring their victim pleasure. Oftentimes the victim may even be asked to leave and come back, etc. This Rapist needs the assurance of their victim that they are in control, and that they are sexually desirable and able to satisfy them (a view they will hold of themselves). The rape itself acts as a way of convincing/reassuring themselves that they are both socially and sexually acceptable. They do however suffer from questioning this view of themselves, and can often be dissuaded from carrying out an assault if their victim is verbally forceful and questions them.

Power Assurance Rapists build their fantasies up, and may precede their assault by spying on women, and possibly taking underwear and clothing from clothes lines, etc. They need to convince themselves that they are in some form of relationship with the person they assault, and having some form of trophy, such as a piece of intimate clothing, allows them something to fixate on and build their fantasy around - this is why it is important to take thefts of underwear, etc. seriously, as they could be a pre-violence indicator of a sexual assault.

The assault itself will be of a blitzing nature (though it is more likely that there will be actions of control

and restraint, rather than physical punishment e.g. punching, hair-pulling etc.), and be fast and sudden. This will act as the way for the rapist to "socially introduce" themselves to their victim as they lack the social and conversational skills to make contact or communicate with the victim. They "hope" that the victim will desire them and respond positively to the assault.

POWER ASSERTIVE RAPIST

The Power Assertive Rapist, is the entitled sexual predator who believes that they have the right to treat women as they want. These are often the individuals who commit sexual assaults within marriage and are emotionally abusive to their partners - Not all emotionally abusive partners are rapists, but often abusive partners who are controlling in nature will force and demand sexual compliance from their partners (you can learn more about such emotionally abusive partners in the next module). They believe that women exist for their own gratification and have no rights beyond this.

The fantasy element that is present in many rapes is small and/or non-existent where Power Assertive Rapists are concerned. Many date or acquaintance rapes are committed by these rapists who believe sex is their right, and that their "date" doesn't have the right to refuse them of this - you can learn more about "Date and Acquaintance Rapists" in a later module.

ANGER RETALIATORY RAPISTS

These rapists, are righting wrongs that have been committed against them by specific women, as well as women in general. These aren't always actual wrongs, but may be perceived ones. Often such individuals have been emotionally abused and emasculated by a dominant female in their lives - usually their mother (but could be an ex or current partner etc.) - and are seeking to punish their victims, as well as demonstrate power and control over them (something they have not had or experienced in their previous interactions with women). These assaults are more about punishment than sexual excitement, and involve a great deal of physical abuse.

There is usually little planning to such assaults, and they tend to occur as part of an emotional outburst, rather than acting out a detailed plan or fantasy. Victim selection may be triggered by the victim wearing the same coat, dress or other clothing item, or behaving in a manner reminiscent of the female who used to emasculate them. The assault itself is usually short in duration, lasting the length of the assailant's emotional discharge of anger.

Often, Power Assertive Rapists will find it difficult to get an erection. In these types of sexual assaults, power/control and rage are more prevalent than any actual sexual excitement, and so there may be little or no actual sexual desire present - this can be confusing for the victim, both at the time of the assault and afterwards. In some cases, the rapist will be completely dissociated from the assault, and

when talking about it later they may act as if they were a third party, watching the assault, rather than as the one perpetrating it. The assailant may be so far "removed" from the event that they are unaware of their level of aggression and the extent of the physical pain and damage they are causing (this in no way relieves them of responsibility for their actions).

Dissociation, can also be experienced by the victim during a sexual assault; this is a psychological coping mechanism that the body employs when the emotional trauma a person is experiencing is severe. Rather than see the assault as happening to the person, the mind alters the way it is being perceived so that it seems like the victim is actually an onlooker to somebody else's assault.

The assaults of Power Assertive Rapists are normally "Blitzing" in their style/method, involving sudden and unexpected assaults, sometimes with no preceding dialogue. They may also be "Slow" or "Fast Burn" in nature, with the assailant becoming more enraged and emotional over a period of time.

ANGER EXCITEMENT RAPISTS

These are the individuals we fear the most, and have every right to. They are the sexual sadists, who take pleasure from other people's pain and suffering. It's not simply a matter, that they don't recognize another person's distressed emotional state (like the psychopath who is indifferent to the way others feel), but rather that their pleasure is derived from it. In controlled studies, it has demonstrated that the sexual element of an "Anger Excitement Rapist's" pleasure is significantly less important than the perceived pain and distress of the person they are exposed to. The Sadist uses sex to degrade, humiliate and cause pain, rather than for any actual sexual satisfaction.

Sadistic Rapists spend a long time fantasizing and planning their assaults, which are often ritualistic and complex in nature. In many ways, the actual assault is an attempt to realize the fantasy, however as in many cases the real thing generally fails to live up to what was imagined and fantasized over. This causes the Anger Excitement Rapist to keep pushing the envelope of the fantasy, making it more and more extreme, in an attempt to actually derive the imagined pleasure that the execution and realization of it should bring. This means that after several iterations, the fantasy will probably involve the killing of the victim.

Sadists like to inflict pain at every opportunity. Often, they will tell their victim what they are going to do to them, so that they can feed off the emotional pain and discomfort as their victim starts to comprehend what is about to happen to them. The Rapist will then take note of the aspects of their description, which elicited the greatest emotional response from their victim, and promote these things to the top of their torture list.

The types of assault that the sadistic rapists engages in are usually well-planned, and need to be,

because they are designed to last for a considerable amount of time. This type of predator will use grooming methods and ambush-type techniques to gain access to a victim. They can rarely be talked out of committing an assault, once a person finds themselves isolated with them, as any sign of distress or fear will feed their excitement.

Not all sadists engage in rape, some find partners or other individuals who willingly consent to the types of pain and torture that these individuals inflict i.e. they have masochistic tendencies. What drives these sadists to rape is their view of women in general; that they are inherently evil and have more power than they should. Their sadism is very specific.

RAPISTS & SEXUAL PREDATORS - CONCLUSION

Most sexual assaults are preceded by a verbal exchange or interview process, where an assailant attempts to assess the degree to which you fit their profile as a victim, whilst at the same time getting you to hand over control of the situation to them - we refer to this process as grooming. This can be accomplished in a very short period of time, and so it is best to adopt a zero tolerance, and even stand-offish manner to strangers who attempt to engage you in unwanted conversations.

Grooming isn't the only method that rapists will use. They may "blitz" you. Blitzing is where an assailant assaults without any verbal warning signs - the sexual predator who assaults the woman on the train without any warning provides a clear demonstration of blitzing. There is also a category of rapists defined as Anger Rapists (Grossman), who will explode into their assault with no warning when an emotional trigger is pulled; this could be a visual or conversational trigger, and doesn't have to contain anything of a sexual nature - these assailants have previously been emasculated by a dominant female in their life (often their mother), and some behavior or action can release their pent-up aggression and see them commit a sexual assault. Blitzing, as a method of assault, is the type of attack that the media likes to focus on, even though it is a far less common method of assault than grooming.

Our greatest fear may be the stranger who is behind us as we walk home late at night, but in a statistical reality, it is the friend or acquaintance in our own home or somebody else's who poses a greater threat.

SEPS (Situation Effective Protection System) is a framework, for understanding how violent situations occur and evolve, along with the motivations behind them, so that it is possible to predict, identify and avoid them. The system was created and developed by Gershon Ben Keren and Andy Rallings. This handout is part of the SEPS free women's personal safety program developed by Gershon Ben Keren. For more information and other course modules, please go to www.womensselfdefense-seps.com.

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