



If you are a victim of rape or attempted rape

To be given to the customer

Sexual violence

Anybody can become a victim of a sexual offence. It may happen anywhere, and the victim may be a woman, a man, an elderly person, or a child. The perpetrator may or may not be previously known to the victim. Sexual violence can also occur in confidential relationships, such as dating, marriage, family, or at the workplace. It is the perpetrator who is always responsible for the incident, not the victim. Sexual violence is a serious violation of an individual's physical and personal integrity. The perpetrator's motives are not based on strong sexual needs. A sexual offence is always about hate, subordination, and the misuse of power.

How to act immediately

Do not wash yourself or change clothes. Always see a doctor, even if there are no visible injuries. Do not remain alone - seek help. Ask a close person you can trust for support. Contact the police and file a criminal report. You can also request a male or female worker to deal with the matter for you.

It is perfectly normal to react

Rape or attempted rape is a shocking and traumatic experience. As a result, you may suffer from strong psychological and physiological symptoms. Psychological symptoms include feelings of fear, guilt or shame, as well as a sense of powerlessness. Physiological symptoms may include sleeping problems and nausea, for example. The rape and its details may spin uncontrollably in your mind. You may suffer from memory problems, and it may feel difficult to cope with everyday routines. What the symptoms are and how long they persist varies with the individual. However, it is perfectly natural and normal to react to such a shocking incident.

Do not remain alone

Allow yourself to seek support from other people. The support and presence of your family and other people close to you are important. However, they may not always know what kind of help and support you need because they are also shocked by what has happened to you. This is why you should seek professional help. It is the rational thing to do. The support network is there for you. Nationally, you can find support in The Rape Crisis Centre (Tukinainen), Family Federation (Väestöliitto ry) and Victim Support (Rikosuhripäivystys). Locally, you can seek help in health centres, mental health clinics, crisis centres, family counselling centres, and family centres.

Talk and feel

Do not try to forget what has happened. Forgetting may make you feel better for a while, but in the long run it will only make things worse. In your mind, live through feelings, recollections and thoughts relating to the situation. Talking, writing or for example painting will help you. Discuss the incident with someone over and over again. Keep talking, no matter how shameful your experience and feelings may feel. Putting the rape into words will help you form a more coherent picture of what happened, and this will make it easier for you to control it in your mind. Do not repress your feelings. Sadness, irritation, disappointment and anger are among the most typical feelings. Allowing yourself to go through these feelings and talking about them will make you feel better. It is normal to experience strong emotional reactions; usually these are temporary in nature.

Be good to yourself

Try to go about your everyday routines. These familiar everyday functions will bring security to your life. Make sure you eat and sleep enough. Discuss the need for temporary sleep medication with your doctor. You may find it difficult to cope at work. Do not demand too much from yourself. Ask for sick leave. Try to find pleasure in things you like to do, and allow yourself to enjoy them. Do the things that have previously helped you to cope with difficult situations. Rest and relax whenever possible. Exercise is important because it will help your body to recover from a state of stress. At times, you may feel that what happened to you seems distant and unreal. This is when your mind is resting and you can gather strength to cope with the situation.

File a criminal report

All forms of sexual violence are criminal offences. According to the law, raping a person's own spouse is also a criminal offence. File a criminal report. Take someone you can trust to the police station, or ask Victim Support Finland to provide you with a support person. A victim of rape or attempted rape is entitled to free legal assistance or a support person. Contact a lawyer. Applying for a restraining order is justified if the perpetrator is known to you and you are afraid of him or her. In addition to filing a criminal report, you may also turn to the police to get information and guidance.

Phone one of the following helplines for more information and confidential support:

Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen, toll-free helpline
0800 97 899 (Mon–Fri 9am–3pm, Sat–Sun, public holidays and on the eve of public holidays 3pm–9pm)
www.tukinainen.fi

Rape Crisis Centre Tukinainen, toll-free legal helpline 0800 97 895 (Mon–Thu 1pm–4pm)

Victim Support Finland, helpline 020 316 116 (Mon–Tue 1pm–9pm, Wed–Fri 5pm–9pm)
Victim Support Finland, legal helpline 020 316 117 (Mon–Thu 5pm–7pm)
www.rikosuhripaivystys.fi

Finnish Association for Mental Health, crisis helpline 010 195 202 (Mon–Fri 9am–6am, Sat 3pm–6am, Sun 3pm–10pm)

Family Federation's Sexual Health Clinic helpline 040 167 9005 (Mon–Wed 1pm–3pm)

*You have the right to receive help and support.
Listen to yourself and let others help you - you will get over it!*



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Practical help and support

Do not leave the victim alone. Be there for him or her, or make sure the victim is with someone he or she can trust. Sexual violence may have a pervasive impact on the victim's life management skills and ability to work. He or she may need help in coping with everyday routines. It is important for the victim not to give up his or her daily routines. Help the victim to make sure he or she eats regularly and sleeps enough.

Talking about everyday matters is important. Find out if the victim needs help in child care or other daily routines. The discussions do not have to focus solely on rape, even though dealing with it is important in terms of the victim's recovery.

If the victim is young, it is vital that he or she is treated as a boy or a girl exactly in the same way as before the rape. Be there for the victim, be close to him or her. It is important for the victim to know that you will be there when he or she needs you.

A traumatic experience may also cause significant sleeping problems, anxiety and concentration problems. The rape victim's feeling of security has been violated. The victim may be afraid of going out alone. Offer to accompany the victim to visit a doctor or police authorities. Encourage the victim to seek professional help.

Psychological support

The victim may go through a wide range of emotions, such as vulnerability, shame, hopelessness, helplessness, fear, guilt, and anger. Tell the victim that you will support him or her and that you believe him or her. Tell the victim that what happened was not his or her fault. He or she could not have prevented it from happening. Understanding and empathy are the key qualities for a support person. You can never make the incident disappear, but you can help the victim to get over it.

Listen. The victim needs to talk about what he or she went through. Do not doubt his or her story or downplay the incident. Let the victim talk as often as he or she wants to. Talking about the incident will help the victim to put it all into perspective. Then the victim's memories of what happened will no longer be just uncontrollable flashbacks.

Help the victim on his or her terms

The victim is going through strong emotions and a roller-coaster of feelings. This is natural and healing. Show the victim that you understand and accept his or her feelings. It is important to go through all kinds of emotions. Crying, grieving, and talking about the anger and fear will help the victim.

It is also possible that the victim may not want to talk about the incident at all. It may also appear that the victim has absolutely no feelings at all. This is also natural, as long as it happens only occasionally. By avoiding the thoughts and feelings connected with the incident the victim has a chance to rest and gather strength for his or her recovery. However, if the victim persistently keeps avoiding the incident, there is a danger that what has happened will not be dealt with. Then you should encourage the victim to come face to face with the events. Tell the victim that you will be there for him or her when he or she is ready to talk about it. If the victim keeps avoiding the incident, professional help will be necessary for him or her to move on.

Sometimes it is hard to find the right words. Instead of talking, you can comfort and help the victim by being there and showing him or her that you care. Sometimes hugging or holding the victim's hand may be more comforting than words. However, sometimes the victim may not want to be touched. Listen to the victim and ask what kind of support he or she would like to get. Becoming the victim of sexual violence will inevitably have an impact on the victim's sexual emotions and thoughts. It is important to let the victim proceed at his or her own pace. Be respectful and discreet. The time needed for recovery varies with the individual. Be patient. Do not expect the victim to recover sooner than when he or she is truly ready for it.

How to cope with the situation

In addition to the victim, the shocking incident will also have an impact on you. You may feel guilty: 'Why could I not stop it from happening?' Or helpless: 'How can I help?' Or anger: 'Why did it have to happen?' It is common also for persons close to the victim to suffer from nightmares, concentration problems, and feelings of helplessness.

It is important for you to make sure that you can cope with the situation. You also need time for yourself to deal with your own emotions and thoughts. Talking or writing about them and exercising regularly will help you in this. Rest and relax to offset the stress and worry. Be good to yourself. You need strength to be able to help the victim. Make sure you know your own limits. You may want to consider talking about the situation with a professional helper or somebody you can trust. You can also find support in a peer support group.

For more information and confidential support for the victim and those close to him or her, please contact:

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