

Risk Reduction Strategies: A Guide

(Adapted from [Cornell College](#))

But I was at a party with friends ...

More than 90 percent of sexual assaults that occur among college students involve people who know each other, and the majority involve use of alcohol or other drugs. There are no sure means to prevent sexual assault. However, you can lessen the likelihood that you or your friends will be assaulted or will assault someone. Here are some tips to consider when you go out:

- Know where you are going and speak up if you are uncomfortable with the plans. Communicate with your date: NO MEANS NO.
- Know that drinking and drug use can impair your judgment. You might not be able to make the same decision you would make if you were sober.
- If you drink, drink responsibly: Eat a full meal before going out, have a glass of water between each drink, stick to one type of alcoholic beverage, know your limits and don't go beyond them, have a designated driver, and don't let anyone else make the decision of how much you will drink.
- Only drink something that you have poured yourself or that comes in a pre-sealed container. Premixed drinks can have more alcohol in them than you might want to drink. Also, drugs like Rohypnol and GHB are being dissolved in drinks, causing the person who consumes the beverage to lose consciousness quickly. Don't drink something that has been left unattended.
- Don't go anywhere with someone you don't know well. If you do leave a party with a new friend, tell the friends you came with where you are going and when you are coming back.

Reduce the Risk of Committing Sexual Assault

- Listen carefully. Take time to hear what the other person has to say. If you feel s/he is not being direct or is giving you a "mixed message," ask for clarification.
- Don't fall for the cliché "if they say no, they really mean yes." If your partner says "no" to sexual contact, believe them and stop.
- Remember that sexual assault is a crime. It is never acceptable to force sexual activity, no matter what the circumstances.
- Don't make assumptions about a person's behavior. Don't assume that someone wants to have sex because of the way they are dressed, they drink (or drink too much), or agree to go to your room. Don't assume that if someone has had sex with you before that they are willing to have sex with you again. Also don't assume that if your partner consents to kissing or other sexual activities, they are consenting to all sexual activities.
- Be aware that having sex with someone who is mentally or physically incapable of giving consent is rape. If you have sex with someone who is drugged, intoxicated, passed out, or is otherwise incapable of saying no or knowing what is going on around them, you may be guilty of rape.
- Be careful in group situations; resist pressure from friends to participate in violent acts.

- Get involved if you believe that someone is at risk. If you see someone in trouble or someone pressuring another person, don't be afraid to intervene.

Reduce the Risk of Being Sexually Assaulted

- Know your sexual intentions and limits. You have the right to say "NO" to any unwanted sexual contact. If you are uncertain of what you want, ask your partner to respect your feelings.
- Communicate your limits firmly and directly. If you say "No," say it like you mean it. Avoid giving mixed messages. Back up your words with a firm voice and clear body language. Do not assume that someone will automatically know how you feel or will eventually "get the message" without you having to say anything.
- Remember that some people think that drinking, dressing provocatively, or going to your or your date's room is saying you are willing to have sex. Be clear up front about your limits in such situations.
- Listen to your gut feelings. If you feel uncomfortable or think you might be at risk, leave the situation immediately and go to a safe place.
- Don't be afraid to "make waves" if you feel threatened. If you feel you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity, don't hesitate to state your feelings and leave the situation.
- Attend large parties with friends you trust. Agree to "look out" for one another. Leave with the group, not alone. Avoid leaving with people that you don't know very well.

If someone you know has been sexually violated

DO:

- Be supportive, listen to them.
- Share your feelings of concern for them.
- Communicate to your friend that they are not responsible for the violation.
- Make sure your friend has a safe place to stay.
- Allow your friend to regain control by making their own decisions.
- Make yourself available to accompany your friend to a helping resource (e.g., hospital, Counseling Center).
- Realize that you too have been affected and seek support if you need it.

DON'T:

- Attempt to seek revenge.
- Make jokes.
- Be angry with your friend.
- Force them to talk and/or take control from them.
- Ask your friend how they could "let this happen."
- Assume you understand how your friend feels.
- Discuss the incident with others unless you have permission from your friend.

If you or someone you know needs help, here are resources:

- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) / 800.656.4673 / Live Chat
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) / 800.799.7233 / Live Chat
- [The Bridge over Troubled Waters](#) / 713.473.2801 (24-hour hotline)
- The Lee College Student Affairs Division – 281.425.6384 – Several offices and individuals can help with reporting, counseling, and advising for those who need to report any incidents on campus.

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